NICOLAS MEDTNER
THE MUSE AND THE FASHION

being a defence
of the foundations of
the Art of Music

Translated *(with some annotations)*
by Alfred J. Swan

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Translator's Note

Only too infrequently are we privileged to hear music discussed by those who stand at its fount. Creators are not prone to let us enter into their sanctum. Even the most effusive of them seem to eschew the subject of inspiration, or the acquisition of themes, or the processes of development to which these themes are subjected; and devote their writing to general aesthetic

ideas (Wagner), matters of orchestration (Berlioz, Rimsky-Korsakov), or criticism of other composers (Schumann, Debussy). Medtner's book is a remarkable exception, dealing, as it does, with the essentials, foundations, the everlasting laws of musical creation.

His utterances were provoked, as he himself tells us, by the bewildering phenomena of modern music, with its abnegation of "classic" melody and harmony, with its attempt of producing a new language of sounds comprehensible only to the few initiated laboratory workers. But in voicing his protest against such a contraction of the meaning of music, which up to the "modernists" was well-nigh universal in its appeal, it became necessary for Medtner to express the inexpressible, to penetrate into the deepest well of human perception, to probe by philosophy and past experience his faith as an artist.

The book is written with his life-blood. Hence its many pages that equal his best songs or fairy-tales, that betoken the prophet's and reformer's passionate eloquence, and make us once more cognizant of perennial, immutable values. That the book was hardly noticed at the time of its appearance in 1935, has not been translated, and brought out immediately in all musical countries, is one of the paradoxes of our confused epoch.

There is no need to fear its wholesale attack of so-called “modernism”. It was, of course, not Medtner's job to separate the grain from the chaff and indicate more specifically what school or personalities he accused of destructive practices.

There was also his professional code of honour that prevented him from mentioning names. But objectivity and tolerance are hardly to be expected from one who is out to expose the evils of the world. The basic justice of his attack is undeniable, and every one of us musicians would do well to look around and see whether he, too, has not been occasionally guilty of laxness in the use of the musical language, or of paying tribute to fashion. The purer and higher the ideal that we set for ourselves, the more chance our art has of surviving, and those who will be inclined to question Medtner as a writer and apologist of the music of the past masters, need only turn to his own output to see the connection and to be convinced of his supreme right to speak as his conscience commands him.

It is the translator's firm belief that students of music and others can only derive the greatest benefit from a perusal of Medtner's book. The fact that Medtner draws his examples and makes his conclusions from the later periods of music, failing to explain on the one hand the fluctuations of the earlier time (precisely the ones that followed soon upon his source - the originally intoned SONG), and on the other the predicament of the modern composer who makes no pretense of speaking a new language, yet is in need of different approaches from those established between Bach and the late romanticists, does but little affect the main issues of the book. Whenever possible, the translator has supplied footnotes and explanations that might modify some of the statements and focus them more correctly.

But essentially the book should be read with courage, as if it was a great cleansing fire, intended to gird the reader all the better for further dealings with the art of music, whether in his own creations, or in his appraisal of the musical phenomena around him.

The original translation was completed in 1945 with the assistance of B. J. Coates, Jeanne Theis, and Janet Gay, students at Swarthmore College. It was thereupon mimeographed to the extent of 150 copies by Aldo Caselli, Comptroller of Haverford College. When this supply was exhausted, I submitted a version, revised with the aid of Jane

B. Swan, to the author himself who has kindly supplied further corrections and annotations. It is this final version, which is now going to print, thanks to the enterprise and support of Dr. Caselli and the authorities of Haverford College.

Alfred J. Swan

Preface

I want to speak of music as of the native language of every musician. Not of the great musical art – it speaks for itself – but of its soil and roots. Of music as a country, our native country which determines our musicians' nationality, our musicality, a country in relation to which all our "ideologies", schools, individualities, are merely sides. Of music as some single lyre directing our imagination. This lyre has obviously gone out of tune, not, of course, as such, but in our imagination and our consciousness. I am not alone in observing this fact. It may be observed not only in the predominant direction of contemporary creation, but in the public's perception of it, which is bewildered, or passive.

I must warn the reader. It is not in my words about music that I believe, but in music itself. It is not my thoughts about it that I want to share, but my faith in it. I am addressing myself primarily to the young generation of musicians who in studying music and perceiving its laws, believe neither in its unity nor in its autonomous existence. We must study and we are able to master only what we believe in. The musical lyre in our imagination (or rather in our consciousness) is in constant need of revision, which is possible only wherever there is faith. This revision is a sort of tuning of our imagination according to the way in which the lyre itself is tuned. It constitutes one of the principal problems of musical toil. Naturally our toil consists not only in the revision of the genuineness of our musical experience, but also in the choice and revision of the genuineness of those means which we draw from the treasure-trove of our musical language.

It has taken centuries to tune up this musical lyre, and all its strings or modes have been adjusted both by the output of the great geniuses and the thought of theoreticians, but not in any accelerated or "revolutionary" way; therefore, let all contemporaries be patient and lenient with every tuner who, like myself, is trying to put its strings in tune; and may they forgive me that tiresome and unpleasant hammering out of each note by which every tuning is normally

accompanied. Though it may appear senseless to the listener, it is certainly indispensable to the tuner himself, both in order to hear the intonation of each string, and to test thoroughly all strings in their interrelation. Nobody expects melodies from tuners of pianos, but only an accurate intonation of sounds. Likewise, no one should expect the song, the thematic contents of music, from the tuner of the lyre that has been entrusted to us by our muse, but merely the intonation of its fundamental senses.[1]

The whole theoretical part of my thoughts has been aroused by a painful bewilderment when confronted by most phenomena of the "progressive" musical world and must be viewed merely as an attempt of an independent comprehension of the unwritten laws, that lie at the root of the musical language. This attempt must not be taken for a pretentious, self-confident sermon, being in reality a pained confession, that is a distressing unsealing of unconscious impressions.

My whole criticism of the now prevailing "progressive" musical movement should not sound like a curse, but like a sort of exorcism. An exorcism principally of the modern (but really quite antiquated) ideology that is built around the following contention: geniuses have nearly always been misunderstood by their contemporaries, therefore every new composer may justify his incomprehensible creations by claiming that they are works of genius.

My exorcism is likewise of the historical approach: to the separate phenomena of our art, as well as the fundamental constructions of its autonomous language.

On the example of modern music of the extreme type we see that such a historical approach, instead of strengthening, rather destroys, the living continuous link with the roots of music and incites every young musician to try and begin a new history of music with himself.

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[1] In Russian the word "sense" is used both in the singular as in the plural, exclusively as the opposite of "'nonsense". Hence the plural "senses" has only one meaning, and has nothing to do with "senses", as faculties that produce a sensation.

My exorcism is furthermore of the epidemic of all sorts of discoveries in the realm of art. A discovery in all fields of knowledge has always been of importance only inasmuch as it was a discovery of something real, existing in itself, and merely unnoticed by us before, America existed in itself before it was discovered.

Whereas in art the principal reality are the THEMES. The principal themes of art are themes of eternity, existing in themselves. Artistic “discovery” consists only in an individual unfolding of these themes, and certainly not in the invention of a non-existent art. “He will not set the world on fire". This reproach incites young musicians who should abandon

themselves to spontaneous thematic creation, to invent all sorts of explosives and suffocating gases, the effect of which is equally pernicious to the art and to the inventor himself, since it destroys those unseen (but nevertheless fully real) wires that connect the soul of the artist with the art itself. No matter how high or significant the impulses of his soul, they are no longer to be incarnated in art when the wires are cut.

And so, I repeat, my exorcism is principally of that stifling, explosive ideology which in our days has destroyed the connection of the artist's soul with his art. It concerns the dark nature of contemporary musical speech which has cut itself adrift from the human soul.

Before I begin, I beg the reader to bear in mind the complete detachment of my thoughts from either the history of music or any definite existing theories of aesthetics, or even music. These thoughts are direct answers to modern musical “reality” which in the course of several decades has been a painful question, and not to me alone.

These answers have accumulated and have been held back for such a long time that putting them in order and enclosing them within the framework of a systematic book, has turned out to be a task beyond me. But I trust that whoever is confronted, as I am, with this painful question, will know how to understand my answers. And if they should seem to many

to be "old and familiar truths", I shall consider myself particularly happy, as it stands to reason that the older the truth, the more undoubted it is and in need of constant reminder.

PART ONE

Introduction

From heaven at midnight an angel took wing
And soft was the song he did sing;
The moon, and the stars, and the clouds on his way
Paid heed to that heavenly lay.

The bliss of the innocent spirits he told
Whom paradise-bowers enfold.
In praise of the great God of heaven he sang,
And straight from his heart the song sprang.

A young soul he bore to her birth, and he wept
The woes which the world for her kept,
And in that young soul there still echoed for long
The sound, without words, of his song.

For long in the world no repose she could find,
Strange desires were haunting her mind,
The music of heaven she heard at her birth
Still drowned the dull songs' of the earth.

Lermontoff. (English
translation by Patrick Thompson)

In Mr. Thompson's translation the last line reads: the SAD songs of this earth. But Lermontoff's meaning (later referred to by Medtner) is "DULL", not "SAD", in Russian "skoosh-nyia" not "groostnyia". [A.J.S.]

He to whom music itself is the most precise and exhaustive expression of feeling and thought, is incapable of talking about it.

Likewise, to every reader who feels music as a" living sound", literary talk about it must appear inappropriate and unnecessary.

But when in the musical reality surrounding us, the sounds of music lose their vitality and break up into atoms, one involuntarily feels an urge to break this silence about music, so becoming to it and sacred to every musician.

Personally, this urge came to me through a feeling, familiar to all, the feeling that man experiences when on a quiet, starlit night, detached from his daily worries, he suddenly finds himself face to face with the universe, and endeavours to understand the forces that control it in its infinite complexity, to find that invisible tie between the various worlds that coordinates them into one great whole.,. I was also urged by the sensation of a man who, finding. himself alone, feels his individuality to be a prison from which he is trying to find his way to his fellow man, a sensation which undoubtedly formed the human language and thereby gave us access to each other, In short, I was guided by an insurmountable aspiration towards UNITY and COORDINATION of DIVERSITY.

This aspiration is in itself both naive and elementary, but just because of this, it must not cause surprise that it was the impulse that prompted me ·to take up my pen. The unity that is surrounded by the universe, cannot but be conceived independently, no matter what we may call it. It is presupposed by the coordination of the worlds that surround the unity conceived by us. And if the aspiration towards. this unity rules the universe and has moreover given man his gift of language, may it help me too in my insurmountable craving to express the INEXPRESSIBLE.

It is impossible to talk about music. It talks itself, and does so precisely at the moment when words fail. It helps man to formulate more accurately what he contemplates ... It talks itself. It has its own "language". The miraculous gift of this

language was discovered by man when he felt his solitude still more poignantly and was drawn to his fellow man still more irresistibly.

But if one cannot and must not talk about music, or endeavour to put into words the inexpressible which it alone can express, it does not mean at all that the language of music does not possess certain clearly definable and long defined elements. If these elements had not been defined we would not possess the great music of history, as an art.

Yes, in the beginning there was the song. the man who first intoned it, did not in his SIMPLICITY, ponder over the choice of the elements, he did not invent them. The inexpressible was expressed of itself. Nevertheless the song was CCMPOSED, i.e. coordinated from separate sounds that had already become its elements.

But the man who intoned the inexpressible was not alone. He was irresistibly drawn to share his song with others. He never considered or called this song his own. In his humanity he deemed the inexpressible to be likewise in the souls of others and endeavoured to coordinate the reflection of the inexpressible in those souls with its reflection in his own. He aimed not at the multiplicity itself of these reflections or at their diversity, but at the coordination of this multiplicity and diversity into a WHOLE. He aimed only at the truth of the inexpressible. And insofar as this aim was not disturbed, he really approached that truth.

On the path towards this general aim, this encompassment of the truth of the inexpressible, there was formed the musical "language". Its elements are in no need of justification inasmuch as they (subordinated, as they are, to the human spirit, each one separately and in their interrelation) betray the same centralization and coordination in their aim towards UNITY and SIMPLICITY. In fact these elements are no more in need of justification than the elements of human speech (i.e. words). They are no more a matter of convention.

No CONVENTION could come into existence if some meaning (word) were not first of all agreed upon. If, before its formation or coordination, the convention of human speech did not presuppose this initial word - reason (sense), we would probably never agree upon common words or common senses.

Exactly the same reason .. sense is inherent also in musical speech. It is, of course, impossible to divide this speech into separate words that could be collected into a dictionary and translated into all the existing languages, Music intones the inexpressible, and for the inexpressible we need not words, but the SENSES themselves.

These senses are contained in the COORDINATED COMPLEXITY of musical sounds. To put it differently: what we may view as the roots of music, are certainly not the dislocated atoms or sounds such as they exist in nature; and Just as the words of speech were not formed from letters, but the letter alphabet arose out of words, so the sound alphabet was shaped from the musical senses.

The senses in the foundations and roots of music are valuable and accessible only to him who not only believes in their derivation from the initial reason-sense of music, but has never doubted the indissoluble connection between these "roots" and the whole musical art that was in existence before him. Otherwise music will be to him only an alien game, and its language an imposed "convention".

It is precisely the connection of man with this legitimate "convention" of musical senses, a convention unimposed by anyone, that determines what may be called musicality. Only to him, who holds dear this connection, is vouchsafed a command of the musical language, and only through a sacred preservation of this connection could musical art be built up and perpetuated.

In contemplating the music that existed before us, every musician could not but experience it as a SINGLE musical language. The inexpressible contents became clear and self-evident thanks to the clear-cut, perfect form of that which was expressed.

The whole endless variety and diversity of the individual contents of musical art that delighted us could only exist thanks to the connection with that inexpressible content, that initial song, that was the source of music. In exactly the same way we were delighted by the diversity and variety of the FORMS of music; which were conditioned not by the NOVELTY of the fundamental senses (which in musical language stand for words-concepts), but by their limitless capacity for RENOVATION through their COORDINATION.

Thus it was spring, that was the great festival of our art - the eternal renovation of the contents of the inexpressible and the form of that which was expressed. Every man rejoiced not in the strangely new, but in the unexpected encounter with the kindred and familiar. Every man rejoiced to the extent of his capacity for APPROACHING unity. No one made so bold as to think of achieving it completely, since he understood that such boldness was apt to take him father from the coveted goal than bring him nearer to it.

Along that path of approach, creation, as well as the perception of it travelled. No one was afraid to reveal his distance from the goal. No one made a secret of it. And if someone made a mistake, swerving from the goal, he was apprised of his mistake by others. And if the appriser himself was wrong, the fact of the apprisal of possible mistakes was a useful reminder of the same goal. Music with its autonomous contents of the inexpressible, would let only those approach who, in entering its shrine, threw off all wordly elements, senses and contents.

Just as its elements had already become senses (or concepts) and not disrupted separate sounds of nature, so it was NOT he who could only hear and understand the disrupted sounds of the musical alphabet, or the disrupted senses of music, that was pronounced a genius, but only he who could COORDINATE all musical senses into one single sense. And therefore, in the perception of the listeners, there was no curiosity about details, but only an attention for the whole.

"Why senses?". "Why a language?". It is true that many define music as the "language of emotions". But why only emotions, and not also thoughts? For are not some emotions in no need whatever of music, being quite easily expressed in simple words, or even in immediate active realization. While some thoughts are so fiery, and yet elusive, as to compel to silence even a great poet "Silentium! … an uttered thought is a lie."[2)]

Music is the language of the inexpressible. Inexpressible emotions, as well as inexpressible thoughts. And why a language?.. Of course, it is not easy to explain it to those to whom music SAYS nothing… Music can naturally be likened to a gesture, or a picture, or a statue, but all these ANALOGIES are inadmissible when we speak of the substance, of the LOGOS itself of music, of its initial song.

The mystical meaning and existence of this initial word or song, as in literature, so in music, is, as it were, devaluated and even refuted by the possibility of those trivial words and "dull songs of the earth"[3)] which in their great multitude often tend to obscure for us the PRIMARY sense of the word or the song.

In reality, however, we fail to notice that our definition even of the trivial and tedious contents of these songs is made possible solely through the remembrance of that which was in the beginning. Generally speaking, every definition, every evaluation is attained by us only through this CONNECTION with the initial sense of ourselves, as also of what we happen to be defining and evaluating.

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[2] This is a quotation from Tutchev's poem "Silentium". Fedor Ivanovich Tutchev was a great Russian poet-philosopher of the 19th c. In spite of a long life (1803-1873) he left only one, not too big, volume of poetry, mostly lyrics, nearly every line of which is fraught with a deep, perennial meaning. Medtner has set many of his poems to music (see the translations of Henry S. Drinker) [A.J.S.]

[3] See the last line of Lermontov's "Angel".

This sense is, of course, depreciated by a trivial or dull content, but no one can deny its existence and therefore also its derivation from the single primary sense. If a sense is thus unworthy of its high descent or derivation, this fact is in need of atonement, the possibility of which is already inherent in the UNINTERRUPTEDNESS of the connection…

Should the terms "language" and "sense" make anyone suspect that the element of rationalism is forced upon music, or if anyone is inclined to deny the REASON of music, I would advise him to remember Pushkin's "Bacchic Song".[4)]

It is only when thought is stripped of emotion that it becomes rationalistic, just as an emotion without thought is merely a sensation. A keenly felt thought is fiery, Bacchic. While an uncomprehended emotion, even if it has a certain animal warmth, will in any case make it cool off very quickly.

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[4] *Here is a literal (unmetrical and unrhymed) translation of the "Bacchic Song" (Pushkin, 1825):*

Why has the voice of gaiety been silenced?
Sound forth, ye bacchanal refrains!
Long live the tender maidens
And the young women that loved us!
Refill the goblet!
Onto the resounding bottom
Into the thick wine
Throw the sacred rings!
Let us raise the glasses and clink them all at once!
Long live the Muses, long live REASON!
Burn, o thou sacred sun!
As this lamp fades away
Before the clear rise of dawn,
So false wisdom flickers and dies down
Before the immortal sun of the Mind (of reason)
Long live the sun, may darkness disappear! [A.J.S.]

Before passing to the fundamental senses of the musical language I want to try and indicate, schematically, the general law of COORDINATION into UNITY which has not been put down by musical theory, but which undoubtedly governs the whole macrocosm of music. It brings into close relationship all the individual phenomena of our art. It governs the process of artistic creation. It also is to be felt in the interrelation of the fundamental senses of our common musical language.

Here is an approximate scheme of the stipulations of this law which throws a light upon the fundamental senses of the musical language:

CENTER	ENCIRCLEMENT (gravitation)
The genesis of song (the spirit of music, its un-expressed theme)	The great art of music (the expressed songs - its themes)
Unity	Plurality
Homogeneity	Diversity (heterogeneity)
Contemplation	Action
Inspiration (intuition)	Mastery (development)
Simplicity	Complexity (of coordination)
Repose	Motion
Light	Shadow

What we must acknowledge to be the fundamental senses of music are correlative conceptions, that stand in unbroken relationship to each other. In this relationship we can observe the pre-eminence of one of the two conceptions, and the gravitation towards it of the other. Besides this, all analogues (pairs) are united in a common gravitation towards the centre.

The whole terminology of musical theory will seem to us like a set of dull, arbitrarily imposed rules, unless we have felt behind them the "unwritten" law, the senses of which can be reduced to similar correlative notions: unity and plurality; homogeneity (of plurality) and its diversity; simplicity

and complexity; repose and motion; contemplation and action; light and shadow, etc.

But even these written stipulations of the "unwritten" law will appear to us as empty sounds, unless we have sensed the working of this law in the whole variety of our great musical art, i.e. if we have not interpreted the DIVERSITY of the individual representatives of music as a hopeless HETEROGENEITY of the sources of the art itself.

UNITY, HOMOGENEITY, and DIVERSITY.

Whether consciously or unconsciously, UNITY is always the centre that governs the emotion and thoughts of the artist in the process of creation. The loss or absence of this centre invariably spells failure – the work is discarded either by the author himself, or by the one who is supposed to perceive it. The work of every artist is a SELECTION from a multitude of IMAGES (in sound, colour, or word) that are at his disposal. This selection is the outcome of a definite feeling, as unaccountable as it is peremptory, as to which. images can and which cannot be connected into one whole. It is just this connectedness that is the indication of HOMOGENEITY. The homogeneity of these images is determined by the artist not according to an outward similarity, but according to their intrinsic kinship. In themselves they are DIFFERENT. For instance, the images of light and shadow are different, but each shadow is derived from a definite given light. Thus light determines both the homogeneity and the diversity of the nuances.

And so for every artist UNITY is the main object of contemplation and the goal of his whole ACTION; homogeneity is the sole condition for the achievement of this goal; diversity - the only form of plurality.

Speaking of the DIVERSITY of plurality we already understand by it something that we perceive in DIFFERENT IMAGES. Just the same, speaking about UNITY, we presuppose some plurality that gravitates towards it and encircles it, We would not need the concept of unity if it were

already contained for us in ONE image, and therefore unity must in no wise be identified with MONOTONY.

The concept of unity is not unlike that of a native country which may be lost or forgotten in proportion to our moving away from it. A coordination of plurality is always required for an approach to unity.

Diversity that has lost the legitimate centre of its gravitation (i.e. unity), in drawing away from it, forfeits likewise its capacity for coordination, and gradually asserts itself as HETEROGENEITY.

Every artist who, in his substance, deals with images, should oppose UNITY to MONOTONY and DIVERSITY to HETEROGENEITY. Unity and simplicity are not given facts, but objects of contemplation. The motion towards unity and simplicity is the free motion of the human spirit along the line of the utmost resistance,

Plurality and diversity are given facts. They exist in themselves, irrespective of our will. We are, ourselves, units of plurality and diversity. And therefore, if we submit to a gravitation towards them we are actuated by inertia, and no longer by the spirit. By our own weight, along the line of least resistance, we fall into them as one of their component units, and pass into chaos which may also appear as unity and simplicity, but in reality has nothing in common either with art, or, in general, with the spirit. In chaos unity is equal to monotony, and simplicity to an impenetrable darkness without an image.

CONTEMPLATION and ACTION, REPOSE and MOTION, SIMPLICITY and COMPLEXITY.

Action which has not been preceded by contemplation is the most manifest absurdity and lawlessness in art. It is not even a manifestation of individuality, but an instinct of the will that has isolated itself, i.e. wantonness.

Repose - contemplation - beholds the theme; motion - action - develops it. It must be clear to anyone that no artistic creation can begin with the development of a theme that has not yet appeared.

Simplicity and complexity are considered by most people as being, in a sense, good and evil. The "good ones" love only simplicity, the "bad ones" only complexity. In reality, however, simplicity and complexity in every art correspond to what in music are consonance and dissonance.

Complexity that is resolved into simplicity, as also simplicity that contains in itself potential complexity, is good. What is bad, is a self-sufficient complexity that does not gravitate towards simplicity, as also the pseudo-simplicity that excludes the main problem not only of art, but of all human life, the problem of coordination.

All that was said above can be reduced to the following propositions:

(1) Absolute unity and simplicity can be given to us only in contemplation.

(2) The more absorbed the contemplation, the more its object is reflected in action,

(3) The simplicity and unity of artistic elements or senses is determined by the degree of their gravitation to this simplicity and unity.

(4) The complexity and diversity of a plurality of elements that gravitate towards simplicity and unity, likewise direct our contemplation to this centre.

(5) The contemplation of the complexity of a plurality, the legitimate gravitation of which has been disturbed, turns into ANALYSIS.

(6) The HOMOGENEITY of the elements justifies their DIVERSITY and conditions their UNITY not only within the limits of each work of art or the individual creation of each author, but also within the limits of all art.

(7) GRAVITATION towards unity and simplicity consists in the COORDINATION of the elements and senses.

THE BALANCE of SIMPLICITY and COMPLEXITY

If the complexity of plurality can in no wise be in itself an artistic goal or the centre of gravitation, simplicity and unity

do represent such a centre, but in order to reach it we cannot avoid the path along which lies the complexity of coordination,

Simplicity cannot be grasped SIMPLY. Such a simply grasped simplicity is always false.

Simplicity plus simplicity is equal to emptiness, Complexity plus complexity to chaos.

Mere simplicity or mere complexity of all elements of music and their coordination are a vitiated abstraction, i.e. a diversion from the vital laws of the musical language.

To a similar abstraction amounts every COMPLICATION of the fundamental, initial senses of music, and such a simplification of their coordination, as is invariably the natural consequence of this complication.

The simplicity of TONALITY and the harmonic constructions based upon it, opened the way to complex polyphony. Whereas the complexity of "POLYTONALITY", as a basis, precludes any sensible polyphony, turning its coordination into an arbitrary "simple" cacophony.

Through the complexity of the coordination of Bach's polyphony one can easily arrive at the simplicity and divine clarity of his themes. It is as if we were drawn in by the inherent, relentless gravitation of this complexity to the simplicity of the theme and the fundamental elements and senses of music.

The simplicity of Beethoven's themes and "harmonies" (i.e. chords) enabled us to perceive without difficulty the endless complexity of his constructions in form ("architectonics"). While, on the other band, the SIMPLE CONSTRUCTION of the dance and song forms, their brief and interrupted periods, as e.g. with Chopin and Schubert, gave more freedom to the COMPLEX CONTINUITY of the melodic lines. In the complex continuity of sonata form these melodic lines must acquire greater brevity and simplicity. The form of melody requires rests (sighs) in the "melody of form". The "melody

of form" requires rests in the form of melody.[5] The brief, interrupted periods indicate precisely a simplicity of form. They are in no wise a sudden running short of inspired thought, but rather those sighs (inhaling and exhaling) without which neither life itself nor artistic creation is conceivable.

The "melody of form・ must not be interpreted as a figurative expression, for the divine form of a Beethoven sonata or symphony is in truth perceived by us as an endless melody. Similarly, we realize that the breaks (couplets, multi-period constructions) in the song and dance forms of Schubert and Chopin are a human concession to a better grasp of the uninterrupted alternation of their divine melodies.

A complexity of RHYTHM invariably demands the strictest simplicity of METRE (division into beats), whereas a complex division into beats (7/4, 11/4 etc,) becomes intelligible only through a comparatively simple rhythm, enclosed within each bar.

The exposition of Bach's Well-Tempered Clavichord, in view of the exceptional complexity of his polyphony, represents the simplest distribution of the whole material for the piano.

Chopin, the greatest "orchestrator" in the sense of scoring for the piano, showed the greatest "novelty" and complexity of this scoring principally on foundations of musical thought which by their simplicity counterbalanced the complex score.

The technical development ("progress") of the instruments opened up wider channels for the exposition (distribution) of musical material. In this sense the technique of musical

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[5] Medtner claims that the expression "melody of form" has never been used before. It might well be so. In any case no one is better qualified to use it, than he. Whoever has heard his play the first movement of the Waldstein Sonata of Beethoven will hove noticed how, gradually, the whole form of the movement acquired the breath of melody, how every arpeggio, needed to complete the form, became a most inspired song. [A.J.S.]

performance has undoubtedly also developed, "progressed". But Heaven preserve us if this technique with its "progress" should finally and irretrievably lead us away from the SIMPLICITY of the fundamental senses of music. What is generally supposed to be artistic progress can be a movement towards perfection only when it contains no deliberate departure from the simplicity of the fundamental senses of art.

Chapter One

THE FUNDAMENTAL SENSES OF THE MUSICAL LANGUAGE IN THEIR INTERRELATION,

The Muse

She loved me as a child, ah, yes, she loved me ever
And handed me the pipe and bade that I endeavour
With childish lips and eager fingers if I can
To. play for her this seven-reeded pipe of Pan,
And with a gentle smile she listened to me striving
To play the stately airs from hymns of gods' deriving,
And then the peaceful songs the Phrygian shepherds play
From morn till night on many a sunny summer day
With diligence I strove to profit by her teaching,
And then at times the mystic maid at my beseeching
With toss of golden curls from off her lovely brow
Herself took up the reed and sought to show me how,
And as the tones with breath divine I heard her capture
My heart and soul rejoiced and thrilled with holy rapture,

Pushkin (English translation
by Henry S, Drinker)

Let us try to collect the fundamental senses of the musical language in their succession and interrelation. A reminder of those well-known musico-theoretical constructions would be superfluous if the majority of our contemporaries did not treat them as historically outlived, i.e. if for the contemporary majority these constructions were not mere dull theoretical terms, dead schemes, but also living symbols of an extra-historical law of interrelation - unity and plurality, simplicity and complexity, etc.

Of course it is not the grammar that makes the language, but the other way round, And we can more easily master a language if we listen to it directly than if we simply learn its

rules. But whether in practice or in theory, any language can become accessible only on condition of the recurrence of the same words for the same concepts, as well as a recurrence of the fundamental patterns of speech. What is UNREPEATABLE in art is merely the individual contents of the speech and the coordination of the fundamental patterns of the language, i.e. the form, while a non-recurrence of its fundamental patterns make both form and contents of any speech absolutely incomprehensible to us.

Obviously the recurrence of the fundamental senses and patterns of musical speech cannot in itself guarantee the mystery of the unrepeatable musical contents. And yet it is the sole condition for our ability to perceive the music. We may not see the mystery of the unrepeatable individual contents in a non-recurrence of the fundamental patterns of speech common to all.

The circumstance that these patterns have become common to all is in itself the greatest artistic mystery of COLLECTIVE creation. Before this mystery of the creation of whole generations, the creation of anonymous authors, without exact chronological dates, a creation that flowed with such a natural continuity, with such a hypnotic gradualness - we contemporaries should bow, as all the great masters of the past bowed before it. Who invented the mode? Who is the author of the triad? Who created our whole harmonic system, so divinely simple in its foundations and so infinitely just in its proportion although complex in development? And finally one may ask - who of the musical theoreticians would not want to be the author of this whole theory, which like every theory that has not been invented by anyone, bears the undoubted imprint of divine derivation?

When we enter a shrine and listen to the liturgical chants, we hear, as it were, the elements themselves (the fundamental senses) of music, hallowed by prayer. The very same elements we hear in our folk-songs. On them blossomed forth the whole of music, as a great art. Ever the same modes - "the seven-reeded pipe", on the keys of which is constructed our major mode (Ionian) and our minor mode (Aeolian), ever

the same triads, tonics and dominants, consonances and dissonances, the same cadences, the same principle of part-writing (coordination). Ever the same gravitation towards unity and simplicity, through coordination. In scrutinizing the senses of these elements we begin to understand the one sense that could create them. The need for a coordination of a plurality and diversity of human souls in their movement towards unity has also affected the coordination into unity of the plurality and diversity of artistic elements.

The first song that once upon a time resounded in the world, left in the human soul one single "living strain" and the strain of this song became the starting point for the coordination between each other of all other strains. This strain has become for us the living symbol of unity and simplicity. In it is contained the whole complexity, the whole diversity of human songs.

AN APPROXIMATE SCHEME OF THE FUNDAMENTAL SENSES OF THE MUSICAL LANGUAGE.

CENTRE	ENCIRCLEMENT (gravitation)
1) the contemplated sound (heard by the inner ear[6])	the emitted or affixed sound
2) time, the plane of music (the horizontal line of harmony- the placement of musical sounds)	the movement in time of all musical senses and elements (the vertical line of harmony - the capacity of musical sounds)
3) · the tonic (the root note of the mode, scale, tonality)	the mode, the scale, the tonality
4) the diatonic scale (diatonism)	the chromatic scale (chromaticism)

[6] The first two listings of the present scheme are an introduction to the rest. The necessity of this introduction, caused by many contemporary phenomena, will become clear from what follows.

(Cont'd) CENTRE	ENCIRCLEMENT (gravitation)
5) consonance (an interval)	dissonance (an interval)
6) the tonic (the fundamental triad)	the dominant (a triad that is the coordinate of tonality)

The relationship between tonic and dominant (as of repose and motion) is the simplest and most elementary form of cadence and modulation. This relationship functions in the simplest (brief) constructions of form, as over its widest expanses.

7) tonality	modulation
8) prototypes of consonant chords - the triads and their inversions	prototypes of dissonant chords - four-note formations (chords of the seventh) and five-note formations (chords of the ninth) and their inversions.
9) prototypes of consonant and dissonant chords and their inversions	casual harmonic formations (suspensions, anticipations, passing, auxiliary, and sustained notes)

Every musical person, having heard some one sound of a definite pitch, consciously or unconsciously, senses it as a kind of tonic. And if his thought was at that time already occupied by some musical "motif", he will involuntarily coordinate the sound that he has heard with the tonic of his "motif".

From this it would follow that if artistic contemplation starts with the song (theme), theoretical contemplation starts with the tonic.

1) A musical sound is not an external sound that we perceive only passively by our external ear, even though we may be able to establish its pitch accurately, A musical sound is a sound that we contemplate, conceive and sense, and therefore hear and feel by our inner ear.

Only such sounds are capable of merging into musical senses; only they are subject to musical execution, notation, and direct musical perception.

2) Time is the area, the plane of music, and therefore every musical thought with all the senses of harmony included in it (mode, tonality, cadence, modulation, chord progressions) already makes up the rhythm that fills the time area. That is to say, musical rhythm, being nothing but the movement of musical thought, ceases to be such whenever the fundamental senses of music are disturbed, and therefore taken by itself must not be included in them.

Speaking of the fundamental senses we can have in mind only their horizontal and vertical coordination, and both these lines, indissoluble in their interrelation, must in no wise be confused in their functions.

3) The mode[7)] is the simplest, most perfect coordination of sound along the horizontal line. The greatest simplicity, in the construction of the mode, resulted in its greatest accessibility to our inner ear. The greatest simplicity of the foundation of the mode has rendered possible the construction on it of the whole complexity of musical art.

But absolute simplicity in human imagination can consist of one note only. In relation to that note the mode is already a complexity. But this complexity is justified by its gravitation to simplicity; the multiplicity of the notes forming the mode is justified by their gravitation to one note. This one note is the tonic of the mode.

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[7] *In using the word "mode" I mean principally our diatonic scale with its major and minor. This scale belongs to the same family of the old modes. Its richness and suppleness, thanks to the chromaticism surrounding it, opened the way to a broad development of the whole musical art. It not only stands in no contradiction to its original source, but gives us complete freedom both of returning to the old modes and of forming new modes, inasmuch as this new does not attempt to replace the common primary foundation.*

The relationship of the tonic and the mode, i.e. the encirclement of the tonic by the other degrees of the mode, has become a fundamental sense of the musical language.

In this way even the involuntary freedom of a one-part melody is justified by the sense of the mode, i.e. the encirclement of the tonic and the gravitation of the so-called leading tones toward it.

4) Chromaticism, which developed later, causing a deviation from the mode, is justified in so far as it surrounds the mode and gravitates towards it in the same manner as the other notes of the mode gravitate towards the tonic. Chromaticism, as an encirclement of the diatonic mode, is also one of the fundamental senses of the musical language. But a chromaticism that has detached itself from the mode, turns into a swamp that cannot serve as a foundation for any musical construction.

5) In the coordination of sounds along the vertical line, i.e. in the definition, distribution, and interrelation of intervals, man's thinking and feeling ear (his inner musical ear) also took part.

The sense of the intervals was determined by the degree of satisfaction obtained by us, i.e. a feeling of repose or achievement, Thus the consonances that satisfy the requirement of repose have become the centre of gravitation for the dissonances which disturb this repose. The interrelation of consonance and dissonance also became a fundamental sense of the musical language.

Dissonance as the symbol of movement, as a temporary disturbance of repose, is justified and rendered sensible only by its gravitation towards the consonance. But the dissonance that has · isolated itself from consonance, even though it represents movement, is in any case only a movement towards the chaos of musical absurdity.

Thus in the simultaneous movement of two voices, their involuntary freedom is justified not only by the sense of the mode and a gravitation towards the tonic, but also by the

sense of the interrelation between consonance and dissonance.

6) Later, from three sounds that were consonant with each other, was formed the TRIAD, which became the prototype of the consonant chord.[8)] Only the triad could become the prototype of the consonant chord, since every new, fourth, sound, added to the triad, produces a dissonant interval that is in need of justification, i.e. a resolution into a consonance.

The consonant triads formed on the degrees of the mode gravitate towards the tonic triad in exactly the same way as the single notes in a melodic line gravitate towards the tonic note.[9)] Moreover, both the leading tones that gravitate most directly towards the tonic, are to be found in only one of the consonant triads of the mode - the triad of the fifth degree, called the dominant. In this way the dominant triad acquired the importance of some sort of determinant, or, more accurately, a coordinate of the tonic, and of tonality. Besides: the movement of tonalities (from one to the other) found its simplest formula in the so-called circle of fifths. In this circle each dominant is at the same time the tonic of a new tonality, the next in succession round the circle. The dominant has therefore become a sort of symbol of direct gravitation towards the tonic, as well as the symbol of movement, i.e. a temporary departure from it.

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[8] The triad, as the prototype of the consonant chord, although anticipated in folk-singing and the English School ca.1300 ("Sumer is icumen in"), did not finally supersede the earlier formation by fourths until the age of Dufay and the Burgundians (ca. 1425). [A.J.S.]

[9] No such absolutely inevitable gravitation towards the tonic triad can be observed either in the music of the early Renaissance (14 c.), or in the practice of some contemporary composers (1950). The tonic triad here is more a "primus inter pares", and the composition may then end on a "secondary" triad, However, the achievement of unity is thereby somewhat impaired, and Medtner's contentions stand fairly unchallenged as the ideal goal. [A.J.S]

Finally the interrelation between tonic and dominant, as the principal coordinates of tonality (as symbols of repose and movement), has resulted in the simplest (fundamental) form of cadences, which function as a temporary or final completion of musical thought and hence determine the stages (a kind of breathing) of musical form (architectonics).

The interrelation of tonic and dominant and the interrelation of cadences are, as it were, the vaults of musical architectonics, both within the limits of the shortest period, as in the long expanses of sonata and symphonic form. This is why tonic and dominant are one of the important fundamental senses of the musical language.

7) Modulation, which has its simplest form in the circle of fifths, possesses an endless variety of other forms thanks to the chromaticism that surrounds the mode and to the enharmonism[10)] connected with it, that gives a new significance and a new function to the simplest chords. And yet modulation may be viewed as a fundamental sense of the musical language only in connection with the tonality that determines it, only as a departure and a return.

Departure and return are the principal purposeful function of modulation. Such a purposeful modulation, especially in the longer expanses of form represents the most important and complex problem. Since the goal (the motion towards a new tonality or the return to the original one) is so definite, it makes it appear a simple matter to many people. Yet this definiteness is nothing but the very same simplicity which requires for its attainment the complexity of coordination.

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[10] *In ancient Greek terminology "enharmonic" was used in reference to intervals smaller than a semitone (the enharmonic species). In modern harmonic theory it designates an instant transition to a remote tonality by a transmutation of sharps into flats or vice versa. The noun "enharmonism" does not really exist in either the English or the Russian language. [A.J.S.]*

The secondary function of modulation does not have a definite goal. Such a modulation, called a passing modulation, is something like a rainbow that glides over the various tonalities. It is important principally as a harmonic colouring of melody. While a passing modulation, free from any definite goal, is also not connected with the complex system of cadences, modulation towards a goal is as closely interrelated with cadences as with tonality, and is therefore a fundamental sense of the musical language.

8) The inner musical ear of man not only determined with accuracy the concordance, i.e. the harmony of sounds, but gave it an absolutely accurate name: the word chord, which means coordination, accord between sounds. Therefore, all sounds that give our inner ear the impression of casual coincidences, that do not form in our musical imagination a definite harmonic image, (of consonance or of the dissonance that gravitates towards it) should by no means be called chords.

We can consider as prototypes of chords only the fundamental constructions: consonant triads, and dissonant four-note chords of the seventh and five-note chords of the ninth whose direct gravitation towards the triads justifies their complexity. These prototypes of chords must be opposed to the alterations formed through a chromatic raising or lowering of the separate voices and to casual harmonic formations (suspension, anticipation, auxiliary, passing, and sustained notes) which in themselves do not create the image of chords, and are justified only by their gravitation towards chords, their resolution into them.

The four-note formation of the chord of the seventh (formed by the addition of a fourth note to the triad and yielding, in its relation to the root note, the dissonant interval of the seventh), and the five-note formation of the chord of the ninth (with the ninth added to the chord of the seventh) are the only legitimate prototypes of dissonant chords thanks both to their direct gravitation towards the triads and their capacity for inversions (rearrangement of the parts).

Already the chord of the ninth has only a conditional, incomplete capacity for inversions, and we must therefore consider the five-note formation of the chord of the ninth as just such a limit for a fundamental vertical harmony, i.e. chord, as the one imposed by the seven-note horizontal succession of the mode.

The words "chord" and "lad" (the Russian for "mode") determine by their very roots these musical concepts, as the fundamental tuning of the musical lyre, common to us all. This tuning requires, as a general foundation, the maximum accuracy of intonation attainable by our inner ear. This accuracy of intonation is again nothing but that very same simplicity, on whose foundation alone all the complexity and infinite variety of coordination can be admitted.

An arbitrary addition of strings to our common lyre is far less justifiable than such an addition of strings to their instruments by the makers of violins and pianos. Such an arbitrary addition of strings, altering and complicating the tuning of our lyre, was the addition, by later theoreticians of six-note formations (chords of the eleventh) and seven-note formations (chords of the thirteenth) to the prototypes of dissonant chords.

Absolute simplicity appears to us only in a single note, i.e. the tonic, and the most accessible simplicity of the vertical chord in the triad of the tonic, the coordinate of which is the. triad of the dominant. We must therefore mentally attune and determine the prototypes of the dissonant chords in the first place precisely upon the dominant as a fundamental note, since such dissonant chords (the dominant chord of the seventh, the dominant chord of the ninth) betray the greatest direct gravitation to the simplicity of the tonic triad. The chord of the seventh and the chord of the ninth constructed upon the dominant also possess the greatest flexibility for modulation. Through the enharmonic substitution of certain notes these chords move directly into the triads (or their inversions) of nearly all existing tonalities.

But if we construct on the dominant a six-note formation---the "chord" (if we may call it so) of the eleventh, we shall not fail to see the contradiction between this simultaneous sounding of notes, and the concept of a chord. This simultaneous sounding of notes possesses no direct gravitation either towards the tonic triad or towards any other triad of the mode. This pseudo-chord which contains in itself nearly all (with the exception of one) the notes of the mode, thus sounds simultaneously the notes of gravitation and the notes of attraction or resolution. This pseudo-chord possesses no flexibility of inversions whatsoever. Having constructed such a "chord", in the dominant of C major for instance, we await with impatience its transition into a new dissonant chord--the dominant chord of the seventh from F major. But though we justify in this manner the extreme tension of its dissonant sonority, we cannot justify and rationally conceive its self-sufficiency as a prototype of a dissonant chord. Therefore we must relegate it among the casual harmonic formations which admit an endless variety of simultaneously sounding notes, ornamenting and surrounding the chords. It is true that the construction of a six-note formation on the second degree of a major mode gives us the illusion of a chord because of its euphony, and because of the possibility of its resolution into the triad of the dominant. And yet every chord constructed in such a way that not only its inversions (that is, the possibility of the transfer into the bass of each of its component notes) are impossible, but that even in its fundamental form its notes can be distributed only in a very limited and conditional manner, so plainly shows the accidental though happily accidental, nature of such a simultaneous sounding of notes, that we are compelled to exclude it from the category of the chords which constitute the strings of our common lyre.

Besides, a six-note formation shows already hardly any suppleness in modulation. As applied to the more remote tonalities it sounds simultaneously their diatonic modal degree and its chromatic alteration.

If we consider the seven-note formation of the mode our horizontal formation, and the triad our vertical formation, we must also bear in mind the interaction of these lines and their difference. In constructing triads on the degrees of the mode we naturally get a repetition of the same notes in various triads, but these repetitions, the so-called common tones, are merely factors in the mutual kinship between the various triads; these common tones which are very important in the law of voice leading (the coordination of chords with each other), in themselves sound differently, dependent on the fundamental note, and therefore do not in any wise disturb the originality of each of the triads. In other words: the simplicity of the mode, the seeming poverty of its seven notes, not only did not prevent a great variety and complexity in the triads constructed on it and a horizontal coordination between them, but turned out to be the only firm foundation for this development. In the horizontal motion of vertical chords there was no confusion of the horizontal and vertical line. Neither was there any such confusion in the further construction of the dissonant chords of the seventh and the ninth and their coordination with triads. The confusion of these two lines began from the moment that we try to consider as dissonant prototypes: the vertical six-note formation in which there is a simultaneous sounding of two diatonic triads of different sound (i.e. possessing no common tones), and finally the vertical seven-note formation in which the whole horizontal seven-note formation of the mode is already completely upset. In considering such a seven-note formation not as an accidental harmonic formation, but as a chord, we justify any juxtaposition of sounds within the limits of the mode. But this freedom of juxtaposition, i.e. simplicity of coordination resulting from a complication of the fundamental senses, did not satisfy us.

According to the law of inertia (or, as people say, "evolution") we began to seek a further complication of the foundations in order to make the coordination still simpler and have thus arrived at polytonality, which admits any juxtapositions already within the limits of the chromatic scale. But we were not satisfied even with this. So we began to undermine our tempered tuning and have begun to talk about a quarter-tone system.

(9) The simplicity of the fundamental senses which admits an endless diversity and complexity in their coordination, likewise admits so-called "accidental harmonic formations". This designation, as also the French "*l'ornement melodique*" clearly points to two things: the more individual character of these harmonic "accidents" and "formations", and their connection no longer with harmonic, but rather with melodic thought. Accidental harmonic formations (suspensions, anticipations, pedalpoints, passing, auxiliary and sustained notes) do not in themselves create the image of a chord, but, in gravitating towards it, nevertheless form into a chord. The law of gravitation (resolution) of accidental harmonic formations into chords is the same as that which governs the resolution of a dissonance into a consonance. All types of these formations admit an endless variety and tension of dissonances. But these dissonances are lawful members of harmony and do not give the impression of cacophony inasmuch as they do not pretend to be self-sufficient chords, but merely surround the latter.

Under accidental harmonic formations we have for long classified not only the original text-book forms of suspensions, anticipations, auxiliary and passing notes etc., but also their most varied alterations, i.e. simplifications and complications, abbreviations or expansions.

Theory could but outline a general law to which these formations are subject, an enumeration of them being impossible just because they are to be met with along the path of each individual thought, whereas the constructions of prototype chords are, as it were, the general stages of musical thinking. And so in order to build up that thinking it is

necessary to strictly differentiate the prototype chords from accidental harmonic formations.

Harmony (homophony), as the direct successor of counterpoint (polyphony), in expanding the region of its fundamental vertical constructions (chords), must on no account exceed the limits beyond which the unity of the fundamental senses and the laws of a general musical language (as for harmony, so for counterpoint) is already lost. Counterpoint, as a style, having been gradually transformed into harmony, yet continues to live and act in our imagination, The horizontal polyphony of counterpoint is justified for us through the harmonic, that is the vertical coincidence of the parts, The vertical polyphony of harmony is justified for us by voice-leading, i.e. the horizontal coordination of chords. In both instances the law of the interrelation of consonance and dissonance is in force. This general law likewise points to the interrelation of counterpoint and harmony. A justification of counterpoint only by the horizontal line, and of harmony only by the vertical (so frequently advocated by our "progressive" contemporaries), results in a new style - cacophony.

The discipline of counterpoint demands a free interchange of parts, and to this end the discipline of harmony in creating the images (prototypes) of its chords, has provided that they be pliable and capable of inversions. In the light of this, the five-note formation of the chord of the ninth, which is most characteristic in its image, loses its character and this very image in certain inversions and arrangements of its component notes. Such a tangle, which has arisen on the path of the development of the fundamental harmonic constructions, instead of cautioning us against any further construction of note-clusters, as self-sufficient chords, has led us to a rejection of the centre of the consonant triad, self-sufficient in its simplicity. We have begun to seek another centre in order to justify all sorts of note-clusters, and having failed to find it, rejected any kind of centre. We have failed to understand that polyphony and the formation of note-clusters are not the same. We have forgotten that

polyphony (and what a polyphony!) was far more accessible to our great forefathers, who used nothing but triads, than to us. We have failed to understand that specific RULES and formulae of counterpoint and harmony are · only one aspect of their general LAW, that behind these special rules and formulae there lurks the same gravitation to the simplicity of the tonic, the triad, the consonance, and that only this gravitation can justify the most complex polyphony and note-clusters, and that without it both polyphony and note-clusters are turned into rank discordance.

VOICE-LEADING[11)]

Voice-leading is the law of the horizontal coordination of sound. It affirms and determines the interrelation of chords and renders their isolated existence impossible. In determining their interrelation it also outlines the ways of their coordination. It determines the function of the separate voices, which is connected both with the construction of the mode (the interrelation of its degrees), and with the gravitation of dissonance towards consonance. In determining the function of the separate voices, voice-leading thereby already imparts to their lines an individual varied character. This shows once again the genetic ties between harmony and counterpoint. The modal triads being in themselves simple, their coordination is already the beginning of complex and diverse processes.

The gist of the laws of voice-leading is an absolute prevention and avoidance of any mechanical simplifications in this coordination, which always contains a problem of considerable complexity and only through the mastery of that problem can give an impression of simplicity. Ask an ignorant person to coordinate a couple of triads, and he will invariably start moving them mechanically, in parallel motion and in one direction, e.g. play the C major scale on the piano in

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[11] *In England the term "part-writing" is used instead of the above. [A.J.S.]*

parallel ascending triads. Unfortunately such primitive methods have a great success in our times, and are viewed by many not as simple savagery, but as a sign of originality and freshness.

The prohibition of parallel fifths and octaves which we find in the law of voice-leading, is inherent in our fundamental chord - the triad - which embraces the interval of the fifth and in distributing the latter over four voices, requires a doubling of one of them, i.e. the octave (or unison). Thus parallel fifths and octaves are equivalent to a mechanical juxtaposition of triads. Parallel thirds and sixths are preferable to parallel fifths, because neither the third, nor the sixth, in themselves, yield or determine the image of the triad, which is determined only by the fifth. Besides, the consonant interval of the fifth happens to be the interval of the interrelation of the tonic and the dominant, which, as opposite coordinates of the horizontal line, in terms of duration, (the mode-tonality, cadence, form etc.), cannot but create the impression of conflict in our inner ear when moving in parallel progression. Our epoch particularly loves and esteems Bach, all of whose fugues are built on the interrelation of tonic and dominant, the theme and the answer, the *dux* and the *comes*. Why not try to play simultaneously the theme and the answer of the first C-major fugue from the Well-Tempered Clavichord, in order to understand, once and for all, why the consonance of the fifth, though a consonance, does not admit any parallelism?

As for parallel octaves, we cannot consider them as anything but the most obvious simplification of coordination. The parallelism of octaves (or unisons) is simply a reduction of a number of the voices by one figure. It is another matter when parallel octaves are sustained as a conscious doubling in order to increase the volume of sound.

This has nothing to do with slipping into octaves through

sheer inertness.[12)] Similarly in the case of fifths: when they occur as a figuration, e.g. of ONE four- or five-note chord, they are quite different from parallel fifths that are ingredients of TWO DIFFERENT CHORDS. However, there are also other exceptions admitting a parallelism of fifths (e.g. when one of the two fifths, being an accidental harmonic formation, gravitates into another interval), but as usual all these exceptions should merely confirm the rules, and behind the rules we must always seek the GENERAL law.

At the root of voice-leading there lies the same principle of a fusion of voices which is known as legato in musical performance. The latter, being rooted in the human voice, has, as its aim, the achievement of fusion, such as breathing gives to a song. No doubt both performance and voice-leading foresee certain interruptions in this breathing, i.e. rests, as also a brokenness, i.e. staccato, but both of these are justified by the continuity of the "mental" breathing, which embraces the unity and completeness of the whole work, its theme-song.

The fusion of voice-leading consists on a preferential gravitation of the voices of one chord to the nearest harmonic notes of the other. But, as we have already observed, to the ignorant person these nearest harmonic notes always seem more accessible through an elementary parallel movement of all the voices in one direction; he does not understand that in simplifying the coordination he gives the impression of complexity in what he is trying to coordinate; that even the simplest triads begin to appear as complex; that this impression of complexity is caused by the isolated existence of each of them; that this isolated existence determines their heterogeneity and at the same time gives the impression of a

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[12] Such a "slipping" into octaves is not uncommon in Russian folk music, where inertness is, of course, out of the question. But there is no consistent four-voice leading in the folk-song, the voices often merging into one another, then again branching out. Hence frequent unisons and octaves appear in the midst of fuller chords. [A.J.S.]

chaotic monotony (piles of identical chords). And so it happens that musical harmony which is based on the unity and homogeneity of its elements - the chords – determines their interrelation and connection in the contrary motion of its voices, as well as in the preservation and seeking of the so-called common tones. The common tones and contrary motion (into the nearest harmonic notes) is the general course along which a merger of chords achieve the greatest diversity of their positions, inversions, and voice lines. This is the path of their organic merger (determining their unity and homogeneity), the only way that is accessible to the perception of our inner ear. All the seeming departures from this general course, all the turns, the leaping of voices that we encounter in the music of the great masters, do not indicate a negation, but rather a search of this course. Finally, voice-leading also justifies a massing, i.e. chains of dissonant chords. If we can consider as a prototype of a dissonant chord only the chord that directly gravitates (resolves itself) towards a consonant triad or its inversion, this does not mean that every dissonant chord achieves this gravitation simultaneously in all voices.

From the point of view of voice leading, chains of dissonant chords or intervals should be viewed as merely the result of a non-simultaneous gravitation of all voices to the consonance; while one part of the voices of a dissonant chord is resolved into a consonant harmony, the other strikes notes that in relation to the latter form a new dissonant chord. Such a successive resolution and departure from it must be viewed as unsynchronized breathing - inhaling and exhaling. Such an unsynchronized gravitation towards the consonance merely postpones the general goal, but does not abnegate it.

THE CADENCE

The cadence, as a partial (temporary) or complete ending (conclusion), as a stage of musical thought, is indispensable to any articulate musical speech. The cadence is not (as many, of our contemporaries seem to think) a conventional bow; it is not dictated by the rules of politeness; it is imposed by the law that governs the breathing of musical thought. It does not impede that breathing. On the contrary, it regulates it and thereby gives it freedom. Whereas an absence of cadences marks the factitiousness of musical thought, its deadness. Cadences must not appear to us as some kind of nails, hammered into the separate pieces of form to hold them together. They are themselves a part of a living form.

The sense of cadences determines the fundamental constructions of form: phrases, periods, a song in two parts (binary) etc. The various forms of cadences also include the so-called false or interrupted cadences which in fulfilling the function of articulateness and breathing, at the same time efface the boundary lines, postpone the completion of form, thereby opening up for it a still wider perspective. It is in the music of Wagner that we find an endless variety of interrupted cadences, while in the quite individual use of the cadence by various composers we have an incontestable proof of the fact that it is a part of living form. By the cadences they use we can easily distinguish Händel from Mozart, Mozart from Beethoven, and finally the Russian folk song from the German or Scotch. The cadence, being the breath of musical thought, and a part of the living form, owes its derivation to the principal commanding theme of music - the song. This is why musical thought that has torn itself away from its original source, the song, rejects the cadence and becomes lifeless.

The construction of the mode, the construction upon it of consonant and dissonant chords and their inversions; the chromaticism that surrounds the mode and gives a new coloration to its degrees, to the voices of the chords, and opens up the perspective for modulation - in one word, all the elements that constitute the strings of our common lyre, gave

the great masters an infinite freedom in revealing their individualities.

All individual shadings, all chromatic or enharmonic coloration of our fundamental senses, all that dazzled us so much in the music of the great masters of the last century, was just so much evidence for us of the inexhaustible and flexible fund of our common musical language. And conversely; all the attempts of past "innovators" to alter the very foundation of the mode (whether by substituting for it the whole tone scale, or by proclaiming the principle of atonality) have turned the musical language into some sort of jargon which in its extreme poverty showed no capacity whatsoever for life.

All the fundamental senses of the musical language, like the strings of our instruments, are in a firm interrelation. The elimination of even one string from our common lyre renders impossible the whole musical game.

Any chess or card player believes that the combinations of his game are inexhaustible, unrepeatable, and therefore he starts every new game on the same chessboard, or with the same pack of cards. Whereas we, instead of playing new games, turn to the invention of a new chess board, new cards.

Every composer can use any complex “unheard-of" harmonies or note-clusters, as well as give them, on his own initiative, any definite denomination as chords. But let him keep it all to himself, for his own personal needs, and not attempt to inflict on the world his new chords and their names in the guise of a new theory. Such attempts have repeatedly taken place during the last decades in the theoretical works of certain composers and have had a very harmful effect on the tuning of our lyre. We must not forget that a theoretical orientation in art is the easier, the simpler the theory. This was very well understood by past compilers of theoretical handbooks, by such great artists as Rimsky-Korsakoff, Tchaikowsky, and others.

The more theory is rooted in the fundamental sense, the more flexible and vital it is, the more it allows everyone to grow new plants from these roots, A needlessly complicated theory serves only to obscure the fundamental senses. By no means everyone is capable of theoretical thinking. Strictly speaking the extent of this capacity should, for a true artist, be quite limited, for only then is his creative contemplation capable of conquering and subduing his analytical consciousness.

Creation is governed by mystery, the revelation of which is equally inaccessible to the composer and to the theoretician, and every question of the uninitiated and the unbelieving as to whether all these "senses of music" can control musical creation, is completely idle. Such a question must be answered merely by another question: can a creation be called musical that does not conform to the fundamental senses of the musical language? And furthermore - what new senses lie at the root of the musical language of those contemporaries who have emancipated themselves from the senses of the past common language?

It is not the word, of course, that imbues man with spirit, but vice versa. But it is hardly likely that the greatest genius could imbue with spirit the words of a language that he does not know, or that even the most sensitive listener could be inspired by the contents of a language he does not understand. This shows that, after all, there is some sort of Word, that was at the beginning, by which human thought and feeling were inspired.

And if anyone should ask why we should see the "senses" of music precisely in these "schemes": the mode, the tonic and dominant, etc., we have to answer him again by a question: what other schemes are capable, by their simplicity to exorcise the infinite complexity of musical art?

Every scheme is an attempt of some sort of exorcism, just as every exorcism may be reduced to a certain formula, i.e. a scheme. And so the main purpose of the exorcising schemes proposed by me is solely to arouse in every young

musician the realization of the vital need of some sort of exorcism.

ADDITIONAL REMARKS

1) Speaking of the FUNDAMENTAL SENSES OF THE MUSICAL LANGUAGE I want to emphasize again that:

(a) the fundamental senses do not exhaust an infinite number of other senses of the musical language that are formed from a coordination of these fundamental senses.

(b) the fundamental senses of the musical LANGUAGE common to all, must never be confused with unutterable sense - the contents of musical SPEECH, i.e. the sense of each given work.

(c) every person whose perception of music starts not from a contemplation of the sensible contents of the SPEECH in question, but from an analysis of the fundamental senses of the musical LANGUAGE, will inevitably begin to hate these senses, since instead of being confronted by the individual contents of any author, he will always have to deal only with those eternal tonics and dominants, i.e. only with the common senses of a common language.

2) DOING AWAY WITH THE PLANE OF TIME FOR THE JUSTIFICATION OF FALSE HARMONIES.

"How is it that you strike simultaneously the triads of C major and D flat major?". "Oh, this is quite simple: the first is, as it were, an auxiliary note, i.e. a sort of triad appogiatura to the second, but struck simultaneously!..." However, here the question arises: why not the second to the first? That is, if we are to allow such a wanton dealing with time, the telescoping of two moments into one, how are we to decide which of these two triads is the principal one, the one that determines the "harmonic note"? Or are auxiliary notes and other auxiliary means henceforth really to be used only to eradicate finally the concept of harmoniousness?... There

was a time when the pupils' ears were boxed for such a performance!... But, maybe, to modern ears such combinations appear simple, seeing that in many classes of piano playing it is now customary to play scales in seconds, fifths, sevenths and other intervals, the inert parallelism of which is an absolute displacement of all senses of music?

3) QUARTER-TONE SYSTEMS AND THE TEMPEHED SCALE.

Music as an art, as an achievement of culture, is a European creation. The musical language, as a "literary" language was formed in Europe. The European musician can hear quarter notes (and further fractions) as keenly, certainly, as others who have not created their own musical art, their own musico-literary language. But his capacity of differentiating the slightest fluctuations of intonation has been used not in order to construct a mode, but in order to be able to attune it. The construction of the mode by utilizing the whole complexity of fractions of tone which we can differentiate, could not be the foundation of the endless complexity of the whole structure of musical art.

And so until another musical art, another musical language had been created, let us be careful not to undermine or break up the foundation of our tempered system, and let us use our "fractional" ear (if it has really become so refined in our times) not for the construction of new quarter-tone modes and instruments, but simply for a careful tuning of the old ones.

4) THE EXCISION OF SENSES (CUTS).

Nature, the chaste artist, in her chastity, hides from our gaze the roots of trees and flowers. The chaste artists of past centuries likewise hid from the public all that belonged to the process of their creation, sharing with it only its results. All the concepts and senses of the musical language were never exposed to the public view and stood in no need of being pushed forward as armaments defending the position of the authors.

But in our warlike, revolutionary age music, as all else, has been converted into a regular battlefield. Upon the positions of modernism guns of the most different calibres have been pushed forward to defend not music itself, but merely every one of its innumerable self-styled "leaders". In the shape of guns there have appeared innumerable "concepts" and "senses" which it is impossible either to conceive or to sense, since none of them manifest any gravitation towards unity, even denying it emphatically,

Many of these concept-senses have quite frankly emancipated themselves from music, being borrowed from a field, alien to it. And even those that remind us of the scraps of former (ancient) musical roots, are in reality nothing but plagiarisms. SUCH A WANTON EXCISION OF SEPARATE SENSES (CONCEPTS) FROM THE ORDERLY AND COMPLETE SYSTEM OF THE MUSICAL LANGUAGE (whether they serve as a justification of complexity alone, that does not gravitate towards simplicity, or of mere simplicity that is supposed to be attainable without complex coordination) I SHALL VENTURE TO CALL A CUT IN THE SENSES. Such a cut, for instance, is the addition of the prefixes "a" and "poly" to the concept of tonality --- this infinity of complexity is corrupt; it denies both the simplicity of tonality and the concept of modulation, the only justification of which is in surrounding the former.

The same kind of cut in the senses may be seen in a return to the so-called "simplicity" of tonal triads, that are piled up without regard for voice leading, the law of their coordination. Such a simplicity, not attained through the complexity of coordination, but stolen as it were, is in fact worse than a theft.

Further cuts in the senses are: self-sufficient dissonance that shows no gravitation whatsoever towards the consonance; chromaticism that does not gravitate towards any mode; form that is bereft of the breathing of cadences; and, in general, manifestations of any self-styled individuality that denies the autonomous existence of music.

Chapter Two

THE MUSICAL SENSES AND ELEMENTS NOT INCLUDED IN THE SCHEME

THE THEME AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

In making the scheme of the fundamental senses of the musical language I naturally did not dare to include in it the most primary, fundamental, supreme "sense" of music - the theme, which is the kernel of form its principal contents; and the development of the theme, which is, as it were, the opening up of the kernel, the form of the whole composition.

The theme is above all an intuition (in German *Einfall*). It is acquired and not invented. The intuition of a theme constitutes a command. The fulfilment of this command is the principal task of the artist, and in the fulfilment of this task all the powers of the artist himself take part. The more faithful the artist has remained to the theme that appeared to him by intuition, the more artistic is this fulfilment and the more inspired his work. His whole action and work is justified by an uninterrupted contemplation of the theme.

While all the other senses of the musical language lend themselves to a certain extent to a schematic definition, the theme is ineffable, and can be defined or expressed only by itself. But in speaking about the theme in general, or in contemplating our own themes we should not interrupt our contemplation likewise of that initial theme-song that inspired all musical art.

If we refuse to admit the oneness of the initial theme of music, if we do not believe in its existence, in its intuition, we can neither believe in individual inspiration, i.e. a genuinely musical intuition. In that case we either mistake an accidental motion of our brain cells for musical intuition, or else we become guilty of a general rearrangement of the fundamental senses of art, i.e. intuition and development, contemplation and action, simplicity and complexity, etc. Such a rearrangement has, of course, the undoubted practical

advantage of an economy of time and labour, for nothing could be simpler than, first, to invent some embryo of a theme, and then let "intuition" do the rest of its development; to be carried away by arbitrary action, and then to "contemplate" it; to put on paper notes which our inner ear cannot hear, and then (in view of the tolerance of music paper, of inanimate instruments, and of an unmusical ear) to listen to them and contemplate them as if they were musical melodies or harmonies. Every artist learns primarily from themes that have appeared to him in silence. If silence does not reveal anything to him, he will never learn anything. But if he fakes thematic intuition he will merely learn to fake the whole work from a faked theme.

By the creation of the greatest masters we see that it was the theme, as a genuine intuition (*Einfall*), that gave them the right to speak in a simple, understandable, perhaps even ordinary language, while the absence of such a genuine intuition always forces the composer to invent the greatest possible number of interesting details which by their complexity can cover up the nakedness of the theme.

The theme is the most simple and accessible part of the work, it unifies it, and holds within itself the clue to all the subsequent complexity and variety of the work. It is the law that regulates each separate work. Every inspired theme bears in itself all the elements and senses of the musical language. It has its own pulsation (rhythm), its own chiaroscuro (harmony), its own breathing (cadence), its own perspective (form). Often it needs other themes as its vassals. Suggesting them, calling them forth, it often reveals in its own flowering their seeds.

The theme is not always, and not only a melody. It is more than a melody, for - as Bach has proved it in his fugues, and Beethoven in his symphonies - it is capable of turning into a continuous melody the most complex construction of form.

But more often than not, the theme is included in, and can be most easily and lovingly contemplated, in the shape of a melody. The melody is, as it were, the favourite form of a theme. If we speak of the theme as of a melodic form, if we endeavour to comprehend the very line of melody, we shall see that its fundamental senses are contained in the self-same cadences, in that same gravitation to the tonic, in that same tendency of dissonances to be resolved into consonance.

We cannot consider as a theme the indefinite, although musical roar that sometimes precedes its appearance, as in Tutcheff's "Floods of Spring".[13] This roar, sent ahead as a herald, only increases our expectation of the theme itself. Neither can we consider as a theme the musical interjections, sighs, and exclamations which can only make us be on the alert for the theme, give us a yearning for it. A truly living, vital theme as has been said already, contains in itself, as in a kernel, the whole form of the composition. Form, as a construction, cannot be separated from the fundamental senses of music, which are contained in harmony, and therefore one can venture to say that a true theme is uninterrupted harmony, i.e. a coordination of these senses.

A theme that has been compounded from accidental, disconnected notes, and that does not contain in itself, or suggest the fundamental senses, can in no wise become the contents, the kernel of musical form.

The intuition of a theme is like an unexpected illumination of its image as by a flash of lightning, after which the artist need only recall it, mentally reconstruct its disappearing contours. In this process of remembering certain points may disappear for ever. This explains those corrections in the themes that we sometimes encounter in the manuscripts of

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[13] *Tutcheff's "Floods of Spring", dating from ca. 1832, evokes the image of the awakening of nature after the long winter sleep. The ice cracks and the rivers and brooks rush ahead proclaiming the return of spring and the coming of the soft, warm May days. [A.J.S]*

great masters, and that are interpreted by many as a process of a rational invention of themes.

The theme is the brightest seal of the individuality of the composer, and hence only the author himself can perceive and unfold its individual senses to the end, while school instruction can only deal with general musical senses, i.e. merely prepare the ground for the growth of thematic seeds.

The simplicity of an inspired theme is an insoluble mystery. Every attempt to solve the mystery of this simplicity is fruitless. Every inspired theme is unrepeatable. An analysis of the unique, the unrepeatable, has neither sense nor object. In analysing the themes of fugues or sonatas we already seek their recurrence: we therefore mentally classify, schematize them. Without denying the use of such analysis in school instruction, we must nevertheless qualify it, since by such an analysis we shall never be able to exorcise the musical substance of each given theme, its individual contents.

Such a qualification is, of course, also necessary for the analysis of the whole encirclement of the theme, since the contents of this encirclement are determined by the substance of the theme itself. But while the inexhaustible complexity, the inexpressible musical contents of the theme render the analysis of its outward simplicity quite conditional, all the fundamental senses of harmony that surround it, can properly be subjected to analysis when taken by themselves, for they, being the common senses of the musical language, are NOT unrepeatable (similar to the concepts of human speech).

And so the theme cannot he reduced to a general incantational formula, as e.g. the fundamental sense of the tonic and dominant in the domain of harmony.

As the main object of the composer's contemplation, the theme, by some hypnosis, can plunge the listener, too, into contemplative oblivion. When listening to inspired themes we lose all capacity of discerning between tonics and dominants, consonances and dissonances, since all the senses of our SPEECH are absorbed by the supreme sense of the inspired LANGUAGE of a living work of art. It is just this

hypnotic power and clarity of the theme that we demand primarily from any work of art, as we are confronted by it. We protest against any kind of analysis, we have no intention of exorcising ourselves the complex contents of the theme, but insist that it exorcise itself, by the simplicity of its form, its surrounding complexity.[14)] The same thing applies to the theme of musical theory, i.e. its fundamental senses; we demand from them likewise that they should themselves illumine, exorcise the whole complexity of their coordination and development.

We forget, and rightly so, the senses of musical speech when listening to, or performing inspired works, as art: but when we study these works and ponder over their structure, we can throw light on them only by these very senses.

What is the incantational formula, common to all music, to which such contrasting pages of music, as, e.g., the volcanic, shattering coda of the Finale of the *Appassionata*, and the enchanting opening of the A flat major Ballade of Chopin, can he reduced? It is always the same old formula; tonic and dominant, or dominant and tonic. Does this mean then that by these formulas the analysis of this music is exhausted? No, it only begins with them and through them acquires a meaning, a centre. Does it mean that Beethoven and Chopin were inclined to think in primitive schemes? No, it only means that their genius could spiritualize the simplest formulas, the most fundamental senses of music. The ancient prayers possessed a similar capacity. But it also means that the senses can be spiritualized, deriving, as they do, from that primeval song.

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[14] Medtner, as a high priest of his art (religion), insists on ritual terminology. "Exorcising", "exorcism" is tantamount to "holding in check", "preventing from getting rampant". Thus, the complexity of harmony, counterpoint, development etc. is held in check by the inspired simplicity of [the] theme. [A.J.S.]

MELODY

Melody as our favourite and most beautiful form of the theme should actually be viewed only as a FORM of the theme.

If in the work of the greatest masters, the melodic form of the theme so often impresses us as the culmination of their thematic inspiration, the lesser masters with their sickly-sweet melodies often impress us in exactly the opposite way, In their works the melodic form, in becoming self-sufficient, degenerates into a melodic scheme and does not contain in itself the potentiality for development that belongs to the melodic themes of the great masters. Such melodies we can no longer call themes. They have not been preceded by any contemplation, intuition, or inspiration. Mostly, they are fabricated like confections, to satisfy the taste of a public that is easily satisfied. Such melodies usually lead in their trail also an extreme poverty of all the other elements and senses. Their whole encirclement: harmony, cadences, modulation - can all be reduced to the most primitive schemes and show practically no motion. Such an incessant drumming on the tonic and dominant, such a metronomic hammering out of the most stereotyped accompaniment, has a pretension to simplicity. But pretension to simplicity is not a genuine gravitation toward it. Simplicity that is wilfully borrowed, that it, as it were, stolen for a definite purpose, is not artistic simplicity - the object of loving contemplation or the outcome of complex coordination.

It must be admitted, however, that a pretension to simplicity or its outright theft, already constitutes an acknowledgement of its cash value, and therefore also an acknowledgement of the incantational power of melody, the incantational capacity of tonic and dominant, and we must hence consider it, even in such cases of exploitation and desecration, as a much more harmless phenomenon, than a complete refusal to reckon with senses and exorcisms.

Infinitely right are music lovers in demanding clarity from every work; they want to look music straight in the face. But

unfortunately they often turn away from melodies that do NOT form into a sugary stereotyped smile.

FORM

Form (the construction of a musical work) is harmony. Every musician who wants to penetrate into the mystery of musical construction will find himself standing before the closed door of any (even the simplest) construction, if he does not have the necessary key – the fundamental senses of harmony.

Form without contents is nothing but a dead scheme. Contents without form, raw material. Only contents PLUS form are equal to a work of art.

Genuine creative form is determined by the depth of penetration into the fundamental senses of musical harmony, which manifests itself alike in the spiritualization of the simplest constructions, as in the justification of the most complex.

A composer who is incapable of inspiring the fundamental senses of the simplest form of binary song, who is incapable of creating the impression of novelty in absolute simplicity, will never master the complex forms; the whole seeming complexity of his constructions will find no justification; this complexity will be just an imitation of artistic complexity,

The complexity of the sonata is genetically tied to the simplicity of the song form; the song form is tied to the construction of a period; the period - to a phrase; the phrase to the cadence; the cadence to the construction of the mode; the mode to the tonic.

A sonata that is built on senses that are not yet found, i.e. on senses of a negative character (e.g. on the senselessness that is termed poly-tonality or a-tonality), as also on odd fragments of the former senses, is a sonata only insofar as it also sounds (sonare).

RHYTHM

In speaking of the fundamental senses of musical speech we have to pass by those of its elements that cannot be singled out in themselves as its fundamental senses, even though they are of great importance in the development of musical thought.

Time is the plane of music, but this plane in itself, is not rhythm. The movement of melody and harmony never takes place otherwise than in time. Thus the simplest movement - in even note values - of a chorale, though it might amount to a certain rhythm, will, when viewed from the point of view of pure rhythm, appear to be neutral, i,e, devoid of it.

This appearance of voidness, however, is erroneous, and the error lies in the fact that an approach to the fundamental senses of music from the point of view of pure rhythm is inadmissible. The change alone from melodic to harmonic senses converts even time units into uneven ones, since the function of those two senses is unequal, and hence diverse. From this we must conclude that it is again the same fundamental senses of music that teach us a genuine musical rhythm. In other words - in the interrelation of rhythm and harmony we cannot but acknowledge the priority of the latter, for only the fundamental sense of cadences determines the beginning of musical rhythm.

If we strip rhythm to the point of its complete elimination from the fullness of the musico-sonorous material, we will get either the rolling of drums, or the castanets, or a negro dance; while the strict harmony of a church chorale, which is carried seemingly to a point of a complete neutralization of rhythm, only underlines the fundamental senses of music. Of course, rhythm is a very substantial element of the musical art. A neglect of this element makes musical form the prose, and not the poetry of sound. As such prose we must view every type of music that attempts to eliminate the measure of bars, or that wantonly changes it at every step. But no matter how we may protest against such neglect, we need not worry about the rhythm of music so long as it lives in our pulsation, in the dance, in poetry, and finally in the

innumerable phenomena of life and nature. In spite of isolated attempts of certain contemporaries to dispense with the division into bars or interrupt and change it at every step, we nevertheless see that, in general, contemporary music, which is mostly intended for performance by large groups, nevertheless does not dare to entrust to them the unmeasured material of sounds. But this is just the point: measured sonorous material alone does not give a composition the right to be called musical poetry, (in the same way as the measure of words does not make poetry).

And finally our whole attention, our whole care in these times, should not be directed principally to the "poetic" or "prosaic" qualities of musical speech, but to the musical "literariness" of sounds in general. Poetry is above all literature. No matter how sonorous the rhythm and the metre of the poetry, they can hardly have any value if the author allows himself for their sake to distort declensions and conjugations, or if the whole poem is, generally speaking, barren of all sense.

And so, while we attach a tremendous importance to rhythm as an element of music, we cannot single it out in itself as a specific and purely musical sense. Rhythm in itself does not even constitute a separate discipline in school education, and therefore a separate discussion of this element is not part of my task.

Song, poetry, and dance are unthinkable without rhythm. Rhythm not only brings them into close relation, but often unites music poetry and dance into one art, as it were. But the musical sound, the poetic word, and the plastic gesture, divide these three arts, and therefore we must consider them as their fundamental senses.

SONORITY. (Dynamics, colour, the quality of sound)

Sonority[15] has acquired the greatest importance in our material age, for the very reason that it is a very materialistic element. A great many people are enticed by a conclusion

[15] *A more apt term would be "timbre". [W.M.A.]*

such as this: since everything sounds - melody, harmony, rhythm, etc. - sonority in itself must be the principal element which coordinates all the others. This conclusion is characterized by extreme inertness. Yes, precisely because everything sounds, not only melody, harmony, rhythm, but the automobile, the factory whistle, and the charming little voice of the pretty woman, which may be commonly called melodious, but which has nothing in common with musical melody - precisely because all of this, sonority in itself has the least capacity for personifying and coordinating the fundamental senses of the mus1cal language.

Sonority can never become a theme. While the other elements appeal to our spirit, soul, feeling, and thought, sonority in itself, being a quality of sound, appeals to our auditory sensation, to the taste of our ear, which in itself is capable merely of increasing, or weakening, our pleasure in the qualities of the object, but can in no wise determine its substance or value.

Having admitted this, and at the same time having admitted that the substance of music is not of the materially sensual, but of a spiritual order, we are compelled to relegate this notorious "sonority" to the rank of a service element. And while all the other elements also render service, but render it directly to "that song",[16] sonority serves but the elements of music themselves. And is it not just because of this that, in a material age, it turned out to be nearer to us along the line that divides us from the oneness of the "song", while the other elements were farther from us?

But in limiting the role of sonority, in denying its supremacy or even its equality with the other elements of music, it is also necessary to determine its positive role. Its main purpose consists in an outward, sensual intensification of the coloration and dynamics (force) of the senses, which in themselves are already included in the other elements, but must be underlined for the perception of our outward ear. But with all this it is necessary to add that this respectable and

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[16] *See p. 7.*

obviously positive function of intensifying the senses and elements of music again turns into a negative one, when it becomes the mouthpiece of obviously senseless musical contents.

Finally the concept of sonority in connection with the distribution of music among various instruments (instrumentation) is already very closely related to the concept of performance. Possessing a great importance, as a sphere of the performance of music, i.e. its most sensible distribution, it cannot and must not play a decisive role in the evaluation of the paths of creative thought. The performance of music, which in itself is an extremely important sphere of our art, and possesses in itself so many substantial elements that many volumes would not suffice for their discussion, should at the same time never be placed among the elements of music itself, as a form of creation. It is true that performance may acquire the seal and force of creation, but only from the senses of the music itself of any given work, and only through coordination with them, a subordination to them and without any attempt to dominate them.

The performer, the orchestrator, and even the composer himself have, strictly speaking, no right to the prefix or epithet "creator", that first big, very big, word that was "in the beginning", for in the light of that word they are all merely performers.

We must not forget that sonority, as "colouring", belongs only to instrumentation. Frequently a dazzling harmonic progression or modulation, or a texture suffused with counterpoint are mistakenly relegated by the contemporary listener to colours in sounds and call forth exclamations, such as: "What sonority!", "What colours!", "what dynamics!"... Such a loving attitude of our contemporaries towards precisely the most concretely material element of music, to "sonority", i.e. to purely physical sound, is somehow strangely compatible at times with a completely abstract approach to music itself.

A SELF-SUFFICIENT sonority amounts to musical impressionism, "Impressionism" in painting requires a viewing from a distance, but such a distance in musical perception has no bearing on the substance of sounds and their conformance to musical senses, affecting only their greater or lesser audibility. And to hear does not yet necessarily mean to perceive, and therefore not all that has been put on paper or that sounds in fact, can be taken in by the musical ear.

So when musical impressionism requires the listener to stand at a distance, it thereby suggests that he step aside from music in general, i.e. interrupt his contact with it: to listen but try not to hear. It is because music unfolds itself before us in time that it requires particular distinctness and accuracy, and therefore we must not approach it with the same criteria, as a painting, which shows us the whole expanse on a canvas at a glance. A smear, as one of the manifestations of life, may be represented in pictorial art, but the noise of everyday life (a smear in sounds) is at the opposite pole of musical art. Noise, though expressed in notes resembling it alone, but not music, becomes musical chaos, and not art. Like poetry, music may at times tell us about chaos. But a song must always remain a song, even when "chaos roars underneath it".[17)]

Thus sonority can never justify musical senselessness. The function of sonority consists first of all in underlining the musical senses. The capacity of wielding sonority is an extremely important ingredient of talent. But we must remember that talent in itself is not an absolute value or an absolute goal. It is no more than the sonority of individual contents. If these contents are of a negative kind, no talent can justify it.

Neither rhythm, nor much less, sonority, can in themselves become a theme.

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[17] The last line of Tutcheff's poem "Why art thou howling, wind of night" (1836) [A.J.S]

But while the theme never chooses the above elements for its abode, it sometimes may be hidden in harmony, in a succession of chords. As an example of this we may take the C major prelude of Bach (from the Well-Tempered Clavichord) that has no thematic (melodic) outline and does not stand in need of it in spite of Charles Gounod's opposite opinion.[18]) The harmony of this prelude is in itself a theme and of course only Bach himself could have converted this theme into a melody if he had deemed it necessary: then the 32 variations (in C minor) by Beethoven which do, it is true, have their theme that stands well in relief, yet relinquish ' its contours from the very beginning and for their whole duration; the relief of the harmony having proved such a safe abode for the theme as to be perceived by us as the theme itself; and finally some of the most inspired songs of Schubert and Schumann, e.g. the "*Doppelgänger*" and "*Ich grolle nicht*", in which the harmony of the so-called accompaniment contains the kernel of the theme in a far greater degree than the recitative line of the voice. This recitative, plastic and expressive in itself, is in these songs less of a self-sufficient melodic theme than in the majority of the other songs of these composers.

Rhythm and sonority (dynamics, sound coloration), in underlining the fundamental senses of musical speech, cannot step into their place. Rhythm, in accentuating the fundamental senses, becomes, as it were, their multiplier.

However, in our times, when our common musical speech is lost, we must beware of approaching its senses in their multiplicity, if this multiplied multiplicity prevents us from coordinating it into unity.

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[18] *Gounod used it as an accompaniment to his "Ave Maria'.*

Chapter Three

THE DEFENCE OF THE FUNDAMENTAL POSITIONS OF THE PAST THEORY OF MUSIC

The law and the rules

In our days when the majority of people have no time to think and when they often think in ready-made abbreviated schemes, this heading will call forth in many minds the following pattern of thought: "The defense of theory? - this obviously means scholasticism!", and further: "The defense of past theory? - this is obviously backward scholasticism!"

The past theory of music (that which remains for us a precious relic of the formation and training of the great composers before the twentieth century) is a sort of well, at the bottom of which the laws of music are hidden. All that we draw from this well, are merely rules. These rules must be valuable to us so long as we presuppose and feel underneath their surface the depth of the laws, so long as they lead us into that depth.

Rules that are perceived in all their interrelation, render possible a gradual penetration into the law which they surround. But rules that are pulled out of the chain of their interrelation as a remedy in some particular case, immediately turn into prescriptions having no connection with the law.

Rules are merely our attempt to sense the law. The more modest we are in relation to our consciousness, the more carefully we shall seek precisely these laws, and try to penetrate into their depth; the truer will be our sensing of them, the more accurate will be the rules,

When one speaks about special musical education, many (mostly dilletantes by birth) think of some huge musico-scientific library, an endless assortment of factual information, recipes, rules, that every musician must always keep in his head, both for his personal practice and for the appraisal of other people's work. Whereas the theory of music, just as the

grammar of a language, just as the preparatory discipline of musical performance, exists first of all to make unnoticeable the technique of composition, the technique of human speech or musical performance. And in order that any technique should be unnoticeable, as a result, it is necessary that the preparatory process of surmounting it should be somehow noticed, i.e. be accompanied by a certain sacrifice of time, labour, mental concentration, contemplation. When this sacrifice has not occurred, then only will the result, the composition itself, the performance, or speech, attract attention, not by its contents (to which often one does not even penetrate) but solely by the imperfection of its technique.

The whole process of assimilation and application in the musical language passes through the same stages as in any other language, if instruction in it is given at an early age. In its assimilation there is the same peremptoriness, unquestioning assent; in its application the same disregard for "conventions" that are inherent in any language.

Every musician by vocation or training is bound to hold in his soul, in his mental representation, the image of music. His vocation presupposes the existence of this image from birth in the as yet vague and narrow limits of individuality; while education must clarify and widen these limits. The vocation is as it were an unconscious awareness of the law of art. Training confirms this awareness with the aid of information, strengthens the perception of this law through consciousness, in the form of rules.

All information and rules the musician needs only during the process of his training. All information and rules, having fulfilled their function as illuminations of the law, generally die out by themselves - in his creative practice the musician forgets about them just as the poet or the orator forgets about grammar.

All hail to the school, those "academies", so abused in these days, which in educating the artist knew how to remind him of the laws of his art and of rules in such a way that he could later forget these rules.

But in our turbulent days - when schoolboys leaving the schools they have hated, and motivated by the sole desire to impress others with their originality, deliberately distort the musical language, and by this distortion so to say, put out their tongues at the whole school - in these days one involuntarily wakes up from blissful oblivion; the put-out tongues compel one to defend the musical tongue.

But in awakening from blissful oblivion every artist remembers first of all the laws which he saw in this oblivion, and which in his consciousness find such an incomplete definition in separate rules, words, signs, and schemes.

The eternal laws are our dreams. But dreams can never be related to the end. Every law is an "unwritten law", since no notation can exhaust it. The laws of the universe are being affixed by humanity in the course of its whole history, and will never be affixed to the end. Much less will the laws of art, which are cognizant not only of matter and mechanics, but also of the mystery of their subordination to the human spirit, ever be exhausted or affixed to the end.

Now why is it that while the great scientists whose minds penetrated into the laws of the material world, have been honest and self-sacrificing in forgetting themselves, their will, and their individuality,- the latest theoreticians of art, a sphere far more spiritual than material, cannot relinquish themselves to this self-effacement in trying to fathom the laws of art?

To this question people will retort, "But in art we deal with individuality!" In creation perhaps, but not in theory. And even in creation we deal not only with individuality, but also with the spirit to which it is subjected as much as to matter; individuality is not the goal toward which the spirit aspires, but only its starting point.

The act of self-effacement is one of the principal manifestations of human spirit, and perhaps it is in that very act of oblivion that we dream and remember all songs and their laws.

Just as the song is the theme and the contents of musical creation, the law is the theme, the contents of musical theory. The value of the transmission of the song, with the aid of various forms and notation signs, and the value of the transmission of the law - with the aid of rules and schemes - consists in an uninterrupted connection with the dream (vision) in which they appear to man. But when the hardly-awakened consciousness, instead of turning to a loving contemplation of the dream that appeared to it, instead of starting a careful survey of phenomena of the outward world for the selection of images that fit the dream, is more and more distracted by the objects that are accessible to its outward vision, the genuine connection with the dream is interrupted, and sober consciousness invariably distorts or fakes the dream itself. Thus contemporary theory, which aims at a justification of the reality surrounding it, steadily loses its connection with the fundamental laws of music.

The theory of music has no right to lean on any sciences or on the theories of other arts. It must not be ashamed of being inaccessible to specialists in science or in the other arts. But it also must not exceed its prerogatives by attempting to create, instead of merely trying to throw light on vital creation. The more careful and attentive and self-sacrificing its sphere of action is, the more accurate will be its methods. The past theory of music has either been relinquished by contemporary modernists, or else it is viewed by them as a historical document that has lost its meaning. It has been relinquished precisely because of its prudence, because, being careful, it has not yet had time to include or illumine all the practices, all the creations, of the latest masters who are our immediate precursors or contemporaries. It is accused of being naive and backward. But its naivety merely points to the fact that it was formed along the path of living artistic Creation, which in itself is always of a naive derivation. Its

backwardness on this path may be explained through the fact that, as behoves it, it trod BEHIND creation and endeavoured to make deductions from general laws, and not to register the whole multiplicity and diversity of individual cases. It aimed at unity, at the point where there would be an agreement between all the individual representatives of music, at the establishment of their common path, and therefore it halted at the crossroads of their individual disagreement.

The past teachers of musical theory, in teaching us the laws of our art (with the aid of rules), passed on to us a kind of testament of the former great musicians. Being simply the transmitters of this testament, they themselves, in their simplicity, believed in its genuineness, and demanded no other faith from their pupils. In their simplicity they supposed that the genuineness of this testament must be clear to anyone who betrayed any kind of relation, i.e. kinship to the testators, and on the basis of this relation, this kinship which made it possible to see this genuineness, they determined the vocation of their pupil, and his lawful right to the inheritance.

Thus in defending the past positions of musical theory I have in view the following: in contradistinction to the majority of the contemporary theories, past theory manifested a coordination of the views of the various handbooks. The authors of these handbooks did not style themselves authors of the theory itself, but merely compilers of handbooks on theory (the textbooks on harmony by Tchaikovsky or Rimsky-Korsakov did not force us to accept the individual methods of these composers).

The coordination of the views of the different theoreticians consisted in a similar direction of these views, "backward" and not "forward", or more correctly, deeper into the sources, and not onto the surface of modernity.

Past theory did not pretend to unfold the mystery of creation, but merely pointed out certain ways for unfolding it. In designating these ways it took care to warn us against eccentric departures from the law – its main theme. It showed

a faith in the general law of all music, and therefore we also find in it the concept of error, i.e. prohibitions and limitations. It saw the general law of all music in the points of contact, in the agreement of all the individual representatives of our art. Its naive faith in the general law points to its purely artistic foresight; it not only made no pretensions to being strictly scientific, but also did not lean on any other spheres of knowledge, or any other arts.

All its methods underlined the autonomy of music. Its naive artistic faith in the unity of music did not presuppose inartistic cuts in the whole musical "system".

It did not give out its rules for the law itself. It enlarged its frontiers very carefully, and was in no hurry to be supplemented by the practice of modernity, since its pedagogic function was to transfer the law into the surrounding reality, and not vice versa. Its foundations coincide not only with the great historical music, but also with the musical nature of simple mortals, e.g. with the folk song. But at the same time it took no interest whatsoever in the non-musical nature of man and left it to the curiosity of historians, ethnographers, and psychologists to meddle in the inarticulate songs of the savage tribes.

Its exceptions to the rules (compromises) only confirmed these rules, and in no way disturbed the general law.

It looked for its laws in the roots of the common musical tree, and made no experiments in growing new trees. And finally, in view of the fact that it did not pretend to unfold the mystery of creation, but served merely as a guide for the mastery of musical speech, for making its technique unnoticeable, I must say in conclusion (and in my justification) that in defending past musical theory I am also defending the mystery of creation.

Chapter Four

STYLES

The source of all styles was, of course, the song (theme). All styles in music aimed only at the affixing of the song, since in olden times style was simply the small rod with which things were written.

Every style affixed the song in a different way, adapted it differently: the polyphonic style distributed its theme among many voices, giving each of them an equal independent thematic part, while the homophonic style entrusted it principally to one voice, leaving it to the others to reflect its light.

In polyphony all voices would be correlated in a logical and independent rendering of the theme; in homophony one voice would predominate, the one that would render the theme, while the remaining voices would support it like a colonnade of sound and put it into relief. But both styles were brought into accord with each other by the surrounding theme-song, and therefore their fundamental law was identical. It is true that the styles operated by the hands of mortals would sometimes lose their way, wander away from their original direction, and show certain signs of unruliness. In this way there arose an arbitrary notion of a "style", Thus there was gradually discovered a self-sufficient existence of the polyphonic style which in drawing away from its primeval source - song - would sometimes obscure the meaning of the latter, taking on the meaning of certain mathematical combinations. The coordination that surrounded the definite centre would thus sometimes lose its goal, become a goal in itself, and therefore turn into mechanical combining. A similar self-sufficiency has also begun to appear in the homophonic style before our own eyes, at the end of the nineteenth century.

The appearance of this style, its original tendency, was nothing but the same gravitation towards one centre, one voice of the song: Hence its name: homophonic. And it must be noticed that in returning to the song it did not abolish the fundamental laws of the preceding polyphonic style, but only

shunned the self-sufficient complacency into which the latter had been drawn. The homophonic style brought back to our minds the unity and simplicity of the song. It rejected the self-sufficient plurality and complexity, rejected the complexity of rules in favour of the simple law. The correlation of the plurality crystalized itself into harmony.

The efflorescence of harmony was followed by an efflorescence of the song form, from which gradually the sonata form also blossomed forth. The greatest representative of this form, Beethoven, conceived his sonatas and symphonies as one song, which by the simplicity of its theme and its vertical correlation, from the beginning to the end of each of his works, illumined to us the whole complexity of his architectonic constructions, i.e. of his horizontal correlation.

The homophonic style began to show signs of decay when harmony focused our attention not as an envelopment for the song, but as a self-sufficient vertical segment, as a chord. The self-sufficiency of harmony (the homophonic style) consisted in the transfer of the centre of gravity from the correlation of the chords (surrounding the song) to the formation of chords.

However, at the outset of this self-sufficient formation of chords we were still able to observe their enticing beauty. We had not yet completely lost the tie with the fundamental formation of chords, and therefore - though the new formations did distract us from the theme-song, though they deprived it of its depth and breadth, its own beauty - they nevertheless, in depriving, borrowed from it, and hence were still reflecting it in themselves.

But somewhat later harmony began more and more persistently to occupy itself with an artificial cultivation of new prototypes of chords, which more and more lost their tie not only with the fundamental formations of harmony, but (by reason of their self-sufficiency) with each other.

The creation of the great geniuses is determined principally by their individual themes, i.e. by their individual contemplation of the one "song". Each of them could only view it from his own point of view, but each of them surrounded it

in the same way. In a similar fashion we must define the phenomenon of styles. The change of styles must always represent not a departure along the line of vitiated infinity, but a return to the centre. The homophonic style, the last of the collective styles in our music, was undoubtedly such a return.

Such a return is neither a revolution nor a counter-revolution, since the new arises from the old naturally and imperceptibly, without shattering any foundations. The new is only a renovation of the old. It repudiates in the old only what removed it from the centre, but in its return to the centre it seeks the past forgotten ways of surrounding it. In this desire for unity both styles showed a correlation, a balance of all the elements in music (in the narrower sense of the word: melody, harmony, rhythm, structure).

But in their yearning for plurality they began to degenerate, as it were, though at first it was not a degeneration, but simply a regeneration. The contrapuntal style was re-born in the harmonic. Although the line of this regeneration is clear to us, it is impossible to define the exact boundaries of the change. We cannot specify the composer who, having finally discarded the contrapuntal style, proclaimed in a revolutionary manner the homophonic style. Haydn and Mozart, who already definitely belonged to the homophonic style, had an equally brilliant command of counterpoint, as of harmony and all other elements.

But that the homophonic style is degenerating can hardly be doubted, since the symptoms of this degeneration had already appeared several decades ago. What are the bends of this degeneration; that is, are there any traces of a regeneration? Regeneration is nothing but a return to the same age-old song. If this return is in evidence to-day (as we had seen in the change of past styles) why do we, in listening to contemporary "progressive" music, think least of all of the eternal "song"?

Why finally have all the elements of this music been thus transformed? - harmony from an enticing maiden into a scarecrow; counterpoint from a complex game of chess into

empty tomfoolery; form either into a pitiful scheme, or a mask; rhythm either into a drum, or a negro dance: and even the famous "sonority" (colour in sounds), which had reached such a brilliant beauty at the end of the last century, and with the most recent composers has gradually replaced and absorbed the value of all the other elements of music; why has it in progressive modernism turned into formless noise?

In listening to the truly great works of music one begins to understand the unity that dictated them, that collected them into a whole. What dictates and collects the works of contemporary modernists? That such a painful question should arise, is in itself just as tragic as it is fruitless, since it is only the eternal song, that was at the beginning and the remembrance of which has seemingly disappeared from our minds, that can dictate and collect any musical work.

Perhaps all the past styles have turned into a simple modern fountain pen, which like all modern inventions saves man extra work.

If polyphony collected the independent lines of the voices into harmony, if homophony regarded the harmonic movement accompanying the theme-melody as a counterpoint, what should we call the contemporary collective style of modernists other than counter-harmony, or cacophony?

Chapter Five

HARMONY AS THE CENTRAL DISCIPLINE OF MUSICAL EDUCATION

Scrutinizing the fundamental senses of the musical language and endeavouring to sense the general law of musical coordination, we cannot but acknowledge that the discipline of harmony is central amidst the disciplines of music.

The concept of "harmony" so often applied in life (in the sense of a coordination of any kind of multiplicity into unity, the gravitation of any kind of complexity to simplicity) was most concretely justified by musical harmony up until our century.

As a musical discipline it coordinates, imbues with its sense all the other elements, all the other disciplines of music. It is the foundation as well as the cement in musical construction. Upon its fundamental construction all individual and collective styles of the musical art up to our day are coordinated. Our ear and our sense of rhythm, that enable us to orientate ourselves in the pitch (intonation) and the extent (durations) of musical sounds, acquire a value only when these capacities are already deepened prior to an orientation in the fundamental musical senses. This deepening, the principal education of the ear and rhythm, begins with harmony,

As far as the most valuable capacity is concerned - that of thematic intuition, of the unconscious acquisition of the theme - it can naturally not be the subject of study in a special class, "A class in theme", "a class in melody", has so far, thank goodness, not existed in conservatories. This would be equivalent to a "class in contemplation", or a "class in creation".

But again, in so far as the construction of the theme is connected with the melodic line and therefore with the fundamental sense of voice leading, it was shaped and corrected in the harmony class and the succeeding classes in the forms (of the polyphonic and homophonic styles).

Harmony and "free" counterpoint may have different rules, but by the law that they have in common they clarified to the student in an equal measure the forms of that living musical speech by which the law is surrounded.

"Strict" counterpoint, however, transferred him into a remote historical past, which had too little in common with the musical atmosphere surrounding him, and which hardly allowed him to penetrate into the common law of music, irrespective of history or any particular style.

In any case a too lasting and persistent instruction in "strict" counterpoint, which is separated from us by many historical stages, had far less *raison d'etre* than could have, for instance, special training in the style of the classics who are much closer to us (Mozart, Haydn), or the romantics (Schumann, Schubert).[19)]

An interrupted line of succession in any instruction likewise interrupts the student's unconscious contemplation of the general law. Instruction in a living language must not be carried on from the historical viewpoint, and should not lean on separate styles of speech.

This observation is confirmed by the fact that the majority of those who have thoroughly mastered the art of strict counterpoint, have freed themselves with particular joy and ease, not only from the strict rules of this style, but while they were at it, also from all the senses of the musical law. The persistent study of this "strict" discipline continues to this

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[19] There is a contradiction here in Medtner's viewpoint. He never ceases to remind the student of the age-old song that "was in the beginning", but he discounts the vast periods in music history that were closer, at least in time, to that song, than the 18th-19th centuries. Such masters as Dunstable, Dufay, and Josquin were surely far more conscious of it than the trivial rococo composers, and a study of classic and romantic composition practices is not too expedient on account of the connotations (with all too familiar works) that they carry for the student, and the possibility of a fatal lapse into imitation. [A.J.S.]

day and strangely enough seems quite compatible with an anarchy in "creative" practice.[20)]

We must assume, however, that in modern instruction harmony has not been completely excluded. And so one might say about it, too, that it has not saved us from modern cacophony. But this is just it: harmony is taught not as the living law of musical speech, but as its obsolete rules.

We do not notice that in rejecting the vitality of harmony as a unified and logical system of musical coordination we thereby reject also the vitality of all the music that existed before us. If the teaching of harmony does not save us from musical anarchy, it is only because harmony appeared to us as a reference catalogue of chords, or as a little pharmacy with patent medicines for the stimulation of blunted emotions, or as a costume shop, where, for little money, one could dress up one's idle thought. We have not understood that harmony, in unfolding before us the fundamental senses of music, shows us the way to an inexhaustible coordination of these senses and their constant renovation.

The fundamental senses of harmony determine the fundamental senses of form construction, define the strong beat, determine the place of form, (stand-still, departure, return, beginning, middle, end, etc.).

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[20] Medtner here alludes to the great esteem in which some of the most extreme "atonalists" hold the composers of the past, especially Bach, to whom they point as the starting point of a process of disintegrating tonality carried to a "logical" conclusion in our times. Such a reference to Bach for propagandist purposes, is of course, highly objectionable. On the other hand, the word "anarchy", as used above in connection with some modern creative practices, is completely inapplicable. if anything, there is too much organization, keeping the mind ever on the alert, but ignoring the ear that craves for subtle harmony und modulation (see the "Ludus Tonalis" of Hindemith). [A.J.S.]

But in insisting upon the priority of harmony among the other disciplines of music, we must not forget that its role is subsidiary to that of the song-theme. In constituting the principal encirclement of the song-theme, harmony acquires the seal of inspiration only in its gravitation toward it.

If we still experience the whole musical art up to our twentieth century as a living word, if we value it not only as a historical past, but as our daily bread, as a testament that even yet provides us with the main source of our musical existence, we should instead of an exaggerated leaning on the historical discipline of counterpoint in the "strict style", create from a combination of counterpoint in the "free style" and the whole harmonic practice of the great composers up to the twentieth century, a "strict style" of harmony.

We should return not to past old practices of creation - that would mean embarking on fruitless imitation - but to that discipline of the fundamental laws of harmony on which the great masters were educated and of which the musicians that are now growing up seem to be deprived.

It is true, the effect of this education has not yet been finally interrupted. We still have some great musicians of the older school. But we have them only among the small group of the representatives of the past century. The present generation - the youth - is educated on a negation of all the past; it is brought up with respect for the present moment only. But since times, moments in real life, never stop and have the aggravating habit of sliding away into the past that is so hateful to us, the position of the contemporary student of music is truly a tragic one: each action, each production of his, having no time to be finished, irretrievably sinks into the past. And the more so the less he has been educated to respect the past as the lawful coordinate of eternity and of the plane of time that is most accessible to our eye.

An acquaintance with the past is of course also included into the contemporary education of youth, but as I have said already, this acquaintance takes on a historical aspect. The "past" point of view is, as it were, demonstrated to the student, but not as one that should educate him or determine

his own point of view; rather it is one which he must at all costs surpass, in order to later earn the title of "Meister". The contemporary "Meisters", the teachers, in teaching the future "Meisters", the students, are not much concerned with the casting of a uniform light over the activity of the genuine "Meisters" of the "past" common to us all, but endeavour principally to justify to their students what they themselves create.

What does not enter at all into the principles of contemporary music education is limitation, imposed in the form of an exorcism; on the contrary, its sole contents are expansion, that would remove all bonds and that comes very close to an abolition of all the boundaries of art.

Theoretical discussion of the works of the great masters of the past is centered not around aspects that define the laws of music that are common to them all, but principally around separate details that represent individual differences and exceptions. Such a method is apt to make those students who are as yet weak and immature in spirit doubt the existence of any general laws.

By leaving his students' faith in the general law unconfirmed, and directing his principal attention to the differences in the individual or collective styles, the teacher weakens his capacity to understand music as a whole. Education begins, as it were, with a cut in the senses.

ACCIDENTAL HARMONIC FORMATIONS

(suspensions, anticipations, passing, auxiliary notes etc.)

These were in the older harmony termed "accidental" only conditionally, so as to differentiate them from the PROTOTYPE chords. Since they were strictly legitimate, their being "accidental" did not mean at all that they were "accidents". All these so-called "accidental" harmonies were sufficiently definite to allow former musicians to indicate them by the exact figures of the "figured" bass. And now this category of "accidental" harmonies, instead of concentrating on itself attention in such a way as to make it clear that even

the seemingly accidental is, in our art, subject to law, and surrounds this law, has aroused in our contemporaries a special curiosity, as a sort of loop-hole that would enable them to dodge the law, i.e. not surround it, but evade.

Accidental harmonic formations gravitate towards the prototypes of consonant and dissonant chords, in the same way as a dissonance gravitates towards a consonance. When there is no such gravitation, the "accidental" harmony turns into an accident. Is it not high time to recognize these accidents (as they were always recognized in the past) simply as false chords?

An accidental harmonic formation taken merely in the vertical segment of harmony, as a self-sufficient chord having neither outlet nor goal, is always likely to be put into the category of falseness. That harmony (and music in general), besides a vertical line, has also a horizontal one, and that its laws apply principally to the interrelation of both lines - must nowadays be rubbed in, hour after hour,

COMPROMISES OF STYLE

But besides the category of accidental harmonic formations there is another category in music (as in all human affairs), that does not allow of theoretical investigation, and is therefore not registered anywhere. This is the category of compromises of style. This category, though it does not exist in a single handbook, has by a sort of tacit agreement of the majority of our contemporaries become the mainstay, the most essential justification of their "creative" practice.

The compromise as a sort of dispensation, a tragic inevitability, may be expressed as "in spite of ...". The compromise as a conscious principle already says: "thanks to the fact that..."

The contemporary majority, instead of "evading" the compromises of the styles of older music, as the latter "evaded" its laws; instead of seeking its laws "in spite of" these compromises, investigated them with a great deal of attention, said "thank you" and began to surround them as their own "centre".

"Modernistic" music has as its foundation the sum total of the compromises of all the styles of past music.

When I speak of the compromise of styles I mean not only the style - the pen of the individual representatives of various epochs - but also collective styles, such as polyphony and homophony.

If we spend our time investigating these compromises through the magnifying glass (since they are invisible to the unarmed eye) the question is bound to arise: what for? In order to avoid them or in order to utilize them?

For some reason or other it is particularly fashionable in these days to extol Mozart above all others. If this preference for Mozart is connected with the ease of his creative process and the number of his works, one could see in it a certain relationship with the practical aims of our contemporaries. If however this preference of our contemporaries for this most infallible musician is due to a real appraisal of the artistic achievements of Mozart, one can only explain it as an example of the law of contrasts.

Mozart's work is the best example of an absence (or at least a minimum) of compromises, but is connected with his individual style, as with the collective styles of his epoch. Mozart' s work is the best example of a merger of the contrapuntal with the harmonic style. His music is equally perfect whether we view it through the magnifying glass of counterpoint or of harmony. It combines in itself only the positive side of both styles. If we discount some very few of his works

(mere drops in the ocean of his divine creation), works that were composed to order, to earn his bread; if we forget some forms of cadences that we sometimes find in his music, formulae that are common to his epoch, not unlike a habitual bow, that social bow that was so alien to Beethoven who opened to us so many new perspectives in the field of the cadence; if we finally bear in mind that even the handiwork of Mozart was infallible and that therefore even those works of his that he merely manufactured, were nevertheless the works of a great master; we shall have to acknowledge that to him more than to anyone else compromises in respect to the laws of musical art were completely alien. The most varied, the most contradictory evaluations of his creations will agree that he was endowed with an infallible, hopelessly infallible "musicality", in the most profound sense of this term.

A compromise in the countrapuntal style are those vertical segments of harmony that taken by themselves and viewed purely harmonically, give us the impression of being but poor chords, though they might be justified by voice leading. We can at times (in the shape of a passing moment) meet such a poor chord in some complicated fugue, even in Bach. But here we must bear in mind the following: though the contrapuntal style has for its goal the most harmonious combination of independent voices (melodies), not a single contrapuntist has ever permitted himself to regard an accidental formation of a vertical segment as a self-sufficient harmony (chord), On the contrary: pursuing principally the horizontal line (a development of voices), he thereby, as it were, orders our attention not to halt on the contemplation of the separate vertical segments. Admitting the priority of the horizontal line and pursuing chiefly the harmonic merging of self-sufficient voices and melodies, the contrapuntist has to deal with such a complex task in coordinating both lines, that a temporary, momentary, transfer of the centre of gravity to one of them (the horizontal) seems a very natural and therefore pardonable fluctuation.

As compromises of polyphony we must also view the false relations that we find at times in complex fugues. The iron logic of polyphonic voice leading, with its rigid adherence to the theme, its specific forms of imitation, canon, etc., though it stands in no contradiction whatsoever to harmonic voice-leading, sometimes admits a compromise in voice leading from the point of view of the purely harmonic style, which is free from the complex problems of polyphony and therefore has a less iron-clad, more fluent and flexible way of voice-leading.

Compromises of the harmonic style are likewise those vertical segments of harmonies that are formed from a movement of harmony in figuration, i.e. the so-called harmonic "accompaniment" of the melody-theme. Most of these harmonies would appear to us to be compromises viewed from the contrapuntal angle, i.e. if we regard the harmonic figuration as an independent voice line which is intended to form a counterpoint, i.e. coincide harmonically at all points, with the melody-voice. To remove this impression of a compromise we need but discontinue the movement of the figuration, or rather establish a colonnade of harmonic successions. Such a figuration is usually justified either by the necessity of the movement or rhythm, or by the requirements of instrumental scoring, i,e, the distribution and enlargement of the harmony according to registers.

A most vivid example of this is Chopin's study in sixths (D flat major, op.25). Anyone hearing this piece for the first time performed by a first-class pianist in the proper tempo (allegro) and with a flawless pedalization, will never dream of thinking of any "compromises", here in the harmonic style. But if the same person happened to be present at a slow reading or an exaggeratedly low practising of this study by some pupil, he would never understand the marvellous and completely natural harmony of this piece.

Chopin himself, a harmonist of the utmost refinement and genius, could naturally not regard as self-sufficient chords those accidental harmonies that result in this piece from a coincidence (mostly on the weak beat) of melodic sixths in the right hand with the figuration of harmony (in double stops) in the left. In other words these accidental coincidences cannot be termed either consonant or dissonant chords. Nor do they belong to the category of accidental harmonic formations, which are called "formations" precisely because they do not lose the image of prototypes, but gravitate towards them and resolve themselves into them. We would have to call the coincidences simply false chords, had the author himself chosen and dished them out to us as chords, or had he, in one way or another, called our attention to them by underlining them on the strong beat, or by an accent, or their duration. In reality, however, the quick tempo, the fleetingness of these coincidences, coupled with the extraordinary crispness and simplicity of the fundamental harmony moving in half notes and sounding so clearly and so luxuriously on the pedal, compels us not to view these separate vertical segments of accidental and momentary coincidences from a contrapuntal point of view. We must admit the perfection of the harmony of this piece in spite of the doubtful "counterpoint" of its separate voices. "In spite of" always indicates the presence of a certain compromise, but one that is quite admissible so long as this "in spite of" does not try to turn into "thanks to".

HARMONY AND COUNTERPOINT

After reading the above, many people (particularly the non-musicians) will wonder: in what then does the difference between harmony and counterpoint consist? To write in counterpoint is to give a HARMONIC coincidence to the separate, horizontal, self-sufficient voices at all points. To write in harmony is to aim at the very same coincidence of points, i.e. at COUNTERPOINT.

Counterpoint, in pursuing primarily the horizontal development of each voice, yet attaches the greatest importance to the coincidences, i.e. to the vertical line (hence its name: counterpoint).

Harmony, though it might appear to arrest our attention principally on the vertical segment of the harmonies, is at the same time not only the science of voice leading, i.e. the plasticity of an already HORIZONTAL line, but, by its whole discipline of the coordination of chords, cadences, modulations etc. opens up before us all the HORIZONS of form.

And that is just it: the difference between counterpoint and harmony is not at all in the relation of each of them to the fundamental laws of musical coordination, vertical as well as horizontal, but only in the STYLE, i.e. the character of the writing, and those specific "forms" (fugue, symphony) that grew up from the soil of each of these styles. And every opposition of counterpoint to harmony, as disciplines of the. coordination of sounds, every attempt of our contemporaries[21)] to disrupt the vertical and horizontal lines of musical coordination, amounts to a deliberate undermining of the. fundamental laws of our art.

The difference between the two disciplines in relation to the musical laws common to them, we may observe in the shape of hardly perceptible fluctuations which, like all fluctuations, belong rather to the field of compromises. But being confronted by a compromise in one of these styles, we determine and correct this compromise precisely by the requirements of the other, i.e. harmony is probed by counterpoint, and counterpoint by harmony.

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[21] Some contemporary composers have been particularly prone to make light of vertical coincidences while utilizing such contrapuntal devices as augmentation, diminution etc. (see Stravinsky's Sonata for piano) [A.J.S.]

It will also do no harm to remember that the same Bach, who in some rare instances, actuated by a peremptory command of the theme and its contrapuntal development in various voices, slips for a brief moment into the roughness of a vertical segment, i.e. chord, that same Bach, enriched music by astounding chord-harmonies that make him into a sort of prophet of Wagner and Liszt. And in a similar way Chopin, relinquishing the specific forms of homophony and abandoning his usual scheme of melody vs. accompaniment, has given us examples of the most perfect counterpoint.

Chapter Six

THE "ACCIDENT"

Every artist, like Atlas, is doomed to carry on his shoulders the whole weight, i.e. the burden of all the elements of his art to their full extent. Every attempt to get rid of one of these elements destroys the value of his whole burden.

If the artist is not gifted in an equal measure with a power over all the elements of his art, he is all the more obliged to seek a balance of his burden. Fluctuations of this balance contingent on the natural gifts of the artist, are inevitable. But, besides, these fluctuations are also connected with the nature of each given theme.

The unrepeatable originality of themes, works, composers, schools, styles, epochs is due solely to the fact that no coordination of all elements can occur more than once. In this unrepeatable coordination we can always observe a certain fluctuation in the balance of the elements, since for us mortals a complete equilibrium means a cessation of life, i.e. death. This fluctuation consists in a partial, temporary transfer of the centre of attention to some one of the elements, in an underlining, a partial stripping of it. A partial stripping of some one element or sense in great art, creates an illusion of its absolute novelty, unprecedentedness. In this way the really unrepeatable, novel, unprecedented manifestation of individuality, e.g. in Chopin, Schumann, or Wagner created an illusion of the absolute novelty and unprecedentedness of the elements of their language.

The "harmonies", i.e. the chords of these composers, seemed new to the world precisely inasmuch as their "harmonies" received a new illumination, i.e. our attention was arrested on them by unrepeatable coordination.

This arrest is nothing but some accent, or "fermata", a fluctuation of balance, which with all great masters showed itself differently, but which never, in any of them, forfeited the gravitation, common to all, towards a centre, also common to all. But every such "accent", every "fermata" that arrests our attention not for a new illumination of musical elements, but in order to dim our consciousness; every fluctuation that disturbs or rejects the centre of equilibrium, has an unquestionable right to be considered absolutely "novel" and "unprecedented", for truly such a device did not exist in the practice of the great masters up to the 20th century,

In the days of our youth,[22)] in perceiving not only classical music, but in hearing for the first time the new works of Tchaikovsky, Brahms, Grieg, and others, it never occurred to us to analyse them. We just enjoyed them. Our direct perception of them was not interrupted by any cuts in the senses. As for the pointedness with which these senses were stripped (especially melodic turns, cadences, modulations, separate harmonic formations or combinations), we perceived it only as a peculiar accentuation of these same senses. These peculiar accents created for us the individual atmosphere of each of these composers, and this atmosphere gave us the possibility of differentiating between them and loving them in a different way.

But from the beginning of our century there gradually began to appear, and later to multiply, in a threatening progression musical works, in which the individual underlining of the senses was replaced by a wanton erasure of them. The spontaneous listener, instead of being lost in blissful contemplation, or perceiving the individual atmosphere of these works, began to suffer at every turn severe bumps from the cutting of the senses. These erasures and cuts had the same effect on him as a minor accident, a collision, or a crash. They stirred up one's consciousness and compelled one to take an account of what exactly had happened, and why.

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[22] Medtner refers here to the turn of the century. [A.J.S.]

When we, in listening to the music of the past, noticed some particular accent, we used to say spontaneously, "How beautiful this is"; we were delighted that this daring accent, this new harmonic formation, did not, in the slightest, disturb the unity of the senses. But when we fix our attention on contemporary accidents, we are frightened not by the complexity of their harmonic formations, but by their loss of every image of harmony, for even the commonest, most usual chords, show no connection with each other, and no gravitation toward unity. Such accidents became in time so frequent, that the spontaneous listener began to suspect their authors of malicious intention, of an obvious desire to turn the accident itself into the theme, into the principal contents not only of the given work, but of all musical art.

We can of course simply step aside from separate works with these accident-like themes, but if a musical faith that establishes the accident as the fundamental theme, as the main task of musical art, is instilled into a whole generation, we must run to the aid of our muse, since the accident, which in itself is simply the result of mechanical inertia and has neither in life, nor, all the more, in art, any individual atmosphere, in becoming a theme, threatens the whole of our art with an accident.

Such erasures and cuts of the senses were in former times simply called mistakes, and as such had no access onto the platform, or as one used to say formerly, into the shrine, of art.

The mistakes modestly stayed at home and in any case did not overstep the boundaries of the conservatory classes. But from the beginning of our century they began to acquire greater and greater daring and to release themselves of their own volition from their house or class arrest. What was previously timid incompetence, acquired the importance of daring harmony and began to be viewed as a symptom of talent. The concept of an artistic mistake appears to be only relative in our enlightened age. This relativity has, as it were, become a new artistic faith. Fearing to transgress against this new faith, the majority folded their hands and

stopped having any kind of opinion about anything at all. This however was most certainly an error, for precisely because everything had become relative, it was necessary, in order to balance up all the contemporary relativities, to oppose to them, as a coordinate, just one more relativity - their relation to music as a unified art, as an autonomous language.

THE SELF-SUFFICIENT DISSONANCE

Just as the special musical gift or talent, dilettantism is also an inborn quality. The dilettante-dreamers usually imagine the process of musical creation, though in collaboration with the muse, but always only in the image of an inspiring muse, not an instructing one. They cannot conceive the zealous diligence with which a musician must "from morn till night strive to profit from her teaching".[23] But there is yet another, opposite type of born dilettante. This type is more dangerous than the first. It is that of the rationalistic, theoretical dilettante. In contrast to the dreamer, this one is active. With his theoretical spectacles he makes a greater impression on the crowd and more frequently penetrates into the life of art in the capacity of a prompter of public opinion. The theoretical dilettante has no use whatsoever for the muse, either as an inspirer, or as an instructor. He believes only in evolution and thinks of it in the form of a changing fashion. It is he who convinced the majority that music was created according to some rules invented by somebody, and does not live in the musical nature of man with all its laws: the tonic and the dominant, consonance and dissonance, contemplation and action, repose and motion, light and shadow.

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[23] *See Pushkin's poem on p. 21.*

Being a believer in, and the preacher of evolution and fashion, he notices merely the movement, the action, the dissonance in its departure from the consonance. But dissonance as a legitimate member of harmony, was ever a factor of the movement that surrounded the consonance. The concept of a dissonant chord detached from its gravitation towards the consonance, or from the concept of tonality, never existed in music before our time.

Dissonance as a companion of consonance may, in its turn, have its own companions in the shape of other dissonances, i.e. dissonant chords or accidental harmonic formations, but each chain of dissonances is justified only by its general gravitation towards the consonance. This gravitation is determined by what, in harmony, we know as voice leading. In pursuing the dissonance exclusively along the line of its departure and separation from the consonance, the theoretical dilettante extended the concept of dissonance up to the point of its full and final departure and detachment from the concept of musical harmony. As a result, the boundary that divides the concept of dissonance, which was formerly in the service of harmonic beauty, from the concept of sheer falseness - the unlawful disturber of it, - has been effaced in our time. Every disturbance of harmony (whether it is felt as a desirable or as an undesirable "incident") is nowadays called dissonance. Let us admit that, because of our human bustle, we not only in music, but in life, prefer the motion of dissonances to the repose of consonances, i.e. that we do not acknowledge the priority, the supremacy, of consonance. But the common sense that controls life even in its bustle, never allowed us to reach the point of a complete negation of a certain interaction between repose and motion, as this interaction is life itself.

Our contemporaries are very fond of taking a bird's eye view of all life on earth, for to do this nothing more is needed than the mechanical wings of the aeroplane. In so taking a bird's eye view, it can be seen that the whole history of music, as well as of human life, has its tonics and dominants, consonances and dissonances, and it is clear that at the present moment all humanity hangs, as it were, on a dissonant chord.

But in observing the "dissonances" of our life, we are sure to become impatient of the endless transitions from one dissonance to another, and to long for the coming of the repose, the consonance. And the fact alone of this impatience and longing testifies to the law of gravitation towards the consonance. Observing daily life from the height of an aeroplane, we not only feel a gravitation towards repose, but cannot fail also to notice such a gravitation in the bustle that we observe. And though we see that not all desire repose and that those who do, never do it simultaneously, that while one voice leans towards repose, others disturb it; yet nevertheless we observe some sort of voice-leading that conditions a certain interaction of repose and motion - we nevertheless observe life.

All people who have the gift of life in an equal measure, also possess to a certain extent the instinct for preserving it.

In spite of our differences we nevertheless acknowledge, in principle, the necessity of voice-leading in life. And if this voice-leading, this coordination of the complexity of multiplicity into unity, does not always happen to be successful, we do not consider our lack of success the goal of our achievement. But music, having foreseen a temporary complexity in the massing of dissonances and modulations that surround the simplicity of tonality and consonances, has only failed to foresee the particular "accident" in which every dissonance, every modulation, in separating itself from its centre of simplicity and repose, has proclaimed itself to be that simplicity and repose. In one word, music, in contrast to all the governments that control the organization of human life, did not foresee anarchy. A government in life has definite

boundaries of its territories and of its laws, that are visible to everybody. An infringement of these boundaries in life, no matter how frequently it may occur, is so perceptible that no one would dream of regarding this infringement as repose, as the foundation of an organized existence. And if such an infringement, aimed, in a revolutionary way, at a correction of the previous state of things, it *ipso facto* incorporated in itself some notion of right and of a form of government applicable to the life of the country.

In art, however, a revolution always means anarchy, the denial of a unified art, as a realm. A party system is impossible in art, since the numbers of parties would have to be equal to the number of individualities, the majority of which was always incapable of seeing the autonomous boundaries of art itself, as a realm. Besides, in order to agree, one has to have something in common. In this case the common bond can only be a common love for art. What we call art, is only the art up to our days. But a revolution is a protest against what has existed. Such revolutions have never been known to occur in music before our time.

Such a revolution, as a definite moment of general explosion, can, of course, not be spotted even in our contemporary music. But such a violent revolution must be pronounced to have taken place in our time as a result of a gradual process, unperceivable by the majority. This process began considerably earlier (approximately two decades) than the first World War and all the subsequent shocks. That this process was unperceivable, may be explained not only by the insufficient musical consciousness of the majority, and not only by the fact that for the majority questions of art have no living actuality, but principally by the fact that the separate phenomena and all the beginnings of this "revolutionary" process were at first covered up by the banner of past music and, as distinct from political revolutions, did not proclaim any new general laws. Only a few sensed a musical nihilism in these phenomena; of these few not all were immediately repelled by it, and of these latter not all understood that the

rise of nihilism in the former shrines of art was an immediate menace to the whole of art.

Thus a gradual disappearance of the faith in a unified art was accompanied by a gradual loss of criteria for the testing of its separate phenomena.

Wagner, who most frequently is pointed out as a model revolutionary, never was one in reality. His love of Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven was not a cold acknowledgement of their achievements. It was a living cult which shows us his deep connection with past music. His reform in the sphere of opera[24)] has nothing in common with a musical revolution. As for his harmony, thematic construction, rhythm, and finally his marvellous development of themes (leitmotifs), we can observe merely an individual illumination, a consummate spiritualization of the unchanging musical senses that were the foundation of all music. Like a true genius, he has merely cast his own light on the primary "leitmotifs" of music itself, deepening and developing them, Finally, in the words of Hans Sachs addressed to Stolzing, he both warns us against a light-hearted neglect of laws, and exhorts us to a struggle against the routine of fashion, as exemplified in the character of Beckmesser.

THE FATAL EXPERIMENT

Once in the days of my youth (at the beginning of our century) I was present at the first performance in Moscow of the "symphonic" work of a certain composer who was then as yet unknown to us, though he had already created a stir in the West, but who has now been pronounced a "classic" because of the stir he has created. When I listened to that work, I for the first time became frightened for music. For the first time I was present on an occasion when noise, ordinary everyday noise, affixed on paper by notes, was represented as music. Frightened, and in no wise intrigued by this clever trick, I began to look around me. I saw bored faces. There was a

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[24] Opera in itself, as a whole, does not represent a specific musical form.

certain bewilderment, but there was no general fright. At the end of the new musical experiment one could conclude, from talking to musicians, that as yet the experiment had not succeeded, but that was all. No one shared my fright. Bewilderment and mistrust for the author were the preponderant opinions, but at the same time it was almost admitted that these might later turn into acceptance and confidence.

A GRADUAL process of perception and penetration into artistic phenomena is a part of the making of an artist. Such a gradual penetration continues with an artist and never stops during his whole life in relation to those artistic phenomena that once and for ever hypnotized him by their depth and beauty. But the charms of genuine art never begin their action, never reveal themselves in the form of BEWILDERMENT or MISTRUST. In such cases, - veritable "accidents" in art, - the reason lies in a want of talent either of the author, or his public. Usually and most frequently the reason of such failure is seen in the differences of the author's and listener's tastes. But a work of art, as an achievement, is the result of inspiration (faith) and mastery (skill), and therefore as a manifestation of all sincere faith[25)] (even if someone else's) and true skill (even though in an alien field), it must arouse at least COMPREHENSION, i.e. understanding, and CONFIDENCE.

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[25] I use the word "faith" in the sense of the sole criterion for any kind of testing. For the testing of figures, we need faith in the sense of figures, in the supreme sense of mathematics. This sense supports our bridges and towers. In the same way musical constructions are supported by the sense, the harmony of sounds. On the other hand, to the notion of faith I oppose the concept of taste. Taste is inseparable from individuality, while faith is a contemplation of what is outside and above us, just as inspiration is first of all self-oblivion.

All our life, in discussing art, we speak of some sort of "inspiration" that seems to be of primary importance in every artistic phenomenon. What, in the last analysis, do we mean by this word? Being enraptured with oneself? But such an inspiration can affect only psychopathic love-struck women! Cold calculation, a deal between oneself and the object of art? But any calculation or deal can only be of interest to the respective parties and to specialists in such matters.

If we talk sincerely about inspiration, if we know what we mean by it we have obviously experienced it at least once, Inspiration is commonly attributed only to geniuses. As if we could pronounce them geniuses and judge of their inspiration, if we ourselves were not moved by it and as if anything but our own inspiration could make us feel their individual genius and the genius of music that inspired them.

If after the concert I mentioned above, after the performance of that experiment, the like of which had never heard before, instead of boredom and bewilderment, I had seen around me an enthusiastic, inspired mood, my impression could be explained merely by my subjective mood at the time or else I would have to admit that my faith in the substance of music is subjective and that the substance of music does not coincide with the substance of my soul, (i.e. that I am simply not sufficiently musical).

And yet I remembered the genuine enthusiasm and inspiration of the same musicians and the same public upon hearing the likewise genuinely inspired words of Beethoven, Wagner, and Tchaikovsky; the inspiration of people in which not only their different souls, not only their different tastes, but also their different capacities to react to the language of music, were completely dissolved.

So then I understood that all boredom, all bewilderment aroused by a piece of music, is a defamation of music in general. I understood that only the genuine inspiration of the composer by his musical genius and the inspiration of listeners by the composer's inspiration, is genuine music, I understood the naive wisdom of former listeners, the listeners of the new Beethoven, and new Wagner, who were not

ashamed to demand from every composer that he should relieve them of boredom and bewilderment, were not afraid of being unjust to the individual (even to Beethoven or Wagner) in their desire to be just to music itself.

These former naive listeners came a great deal nearer to truth, than we do. They did not make individuals into idols and thereby educate geniuses. They educated a faith in music. They knew that a believing fool was nearer to truth than an unbelieving wiseacre. They knew that all boredom and bewilderment must be imputed not to the substance of music itself, but precisely to self-sufficient individuality, to that which divides us among ourselves, and in their protest against this dividing curse, they educated not only geniuses, but themselves.

It was at that memorable concert that I was first confronted with such an "accident" in music. The accident was an unfortunate one for music, because the author who had created the stir, and who for the first time had decided to try to throw into music the ordinary daily domestic disorder, got away with it, we might say. For the first time it suddenly appeared possible to express ordinary daily things with ordinary daily (i.e. inartistic) "music", the cacophonous and unpleasant - by cacophonous and unpleasant music; life's hullabaloo - by a hullabaloo of musical forms,

Thus we were the witnesses of the sacrifice of music to daily reality. But though we experienced no pleasure whatsoever from this manoeuvre, we nevertheless did not hurry to the aid of musical truth. "It will take care of itself", we said. Of course it will, for itself, but not for us, and not in us, if we turn away from it.

Many years have passed since that time (more than three decades). In these years the world family of musicians, still quite rich in genuine artists, began to grow in a far greater proportion to the population of the globe. We could welcome this family increase, if its number would help the spreading of musical truth. But the trouble is that this increase is connected with the spreading of worldly truth and is inversely proportionate to the spreading of musical truth. Of course

even by worldly truth most people mean not what should be, but what happens in reality. Worldly truth is a "diary of occurrences". If anyone avoids reading this column in the daily papers he is usually supposed to be indifferent to life. Would it not be more just to say that it is cold curiosity that induces many to read this column?

MUSIC AS A FESTIVAL

And yet life does not consist of weekdays only, it craves for the festival, and although not always, and even rarely satisfied, this craving plays a great part in life and, in spite of all unforeseen circumstances, has a much better right to be considered life's truth, than all the unforeseen circumstances, than the "diary of occurrences." Music (up to our age) not only always craved for the festival, but actually was one. It was not a festival in the sense in which our contemporaries term practically every concert a "festival" (this is again an everyday terminology). It was not a festival in the sense that it had for its object merely the representation of festivals. No, it was a festival precisely because, not wanting to represent anything at all, it quite naively (and precisely by its beautiful image) achieved a coordination of souls.

Whether it was the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven, or Schubert's simplest little song, the festival consisted of nothing else but that very coordination at which both the composer and the public aimed. That, which aimed at this coordination, was simple and human, but the coordination itself was no longer so simple, i.e. the composer was not satisfied by a mere outward coordination of himself with the public (a cheap and noisy success), but coordinated himself both with music and its laws. And the public, too, yearned not only for a sensation - a cheap substitute for union - but for a genuine festival of coordination, in which all individual differences are dissolved and forgotten.

Nowadays worldly truth, proclaimed to be the ruler of music, has also proclaimed its worldly festivals, having pronounced the musical festivals to be ordinary week-days, and the truth itself of music - a lie!

Former musicians and the former musical public, not content with sensation and sheer unforeseen circumstances, in listening to contemporary "progressive" music, experience its worldly truth as deadly boredom. The hypnotic power of this boredom is frightful. And when someone attempts to protest, he is advised to use a really effective but cruel remedy, called habit. This remedy has also been borrowed from domestic usage where it can be very effective, but, alas, as all the remedies from this medicine chest, it turns out to be ineffective in genuine art. But naturally, its effectiveness is justified in any art that betrays its own truth and serves worldly truth.

At that memorable concert I was destined to be a witness of more than a mere experiment unworthy of music. This new symphonic score, that had fallen into our atmosphere like a new comet, brought in its tail, instead of artistic charms, the poisonous gases of a new artistic ideology. As if some unseen person had whispered to that bewildered crowd, usually so spontaneous in its reaction, strange, alien, and gruesome words: "habit", "taste", "relativity"; conceptions by which every obscurity in art is, as it were, explained and justified, conceptions alien not only to the former artistic faith, but also to the very notion of faith itself. These poisonous gases of the new ideology have not failed in their effect with the passing of years. The initial spontaneous impression of bewilderment and rejection gradually became a passive acceptance, and in this evolution the charms of art itself are no longer active. They are supplanted by the charms of the glory and publicity surrounding the composers, and by the stifling force of habit. More and more rarely do we witness bewilderment among the public listening to the compositions of musical "radicals". Bewilderment has passed into firm, patient, well-seasoned boredom.

We have come to endure more and more unendurable formations, and in this stepwise gradation of their unendurability every lower degree, seen in relation to a higher one, already seems to us to be musical harmony, and the most unendurable one clad in the sonority of a first-class orchestra, seems to be nevertheless easier for our ear-drums to bear than the screeching of bus brakes.

Thought about music should, in our times, occupy a very special place among all the worries and thoughts that fate has inflicted on us.

Friction and disorder in music appeared much earlier than the other disorders of contemporary life. Music is the youngest of the arts. Its tree does not possess such deep historical roots as do those of the other arts, and therefore the storms and hurricanes of modern life are more dangerous to it. Besides, music is the most autonomous of the arts. Alien criteria are less applicable in music than in any other field. Of course depth of contents is equal in all the arts and demands an equal spiritual penetration. But it is much easier to judge by common-sense the periphery of technique and even the good quality of craftsmanship in the other arts, than in music (that is, the outward coordination of features in a portrait or the proportions of the human body in sculpture).

Music does not borrow images from life. It only remembers them at times in its song. All this was of course known to everyone, long ago. But it is strange that this very autonomy of music, instead of protecting it from uninitiated and unmusical people, has quite conversely made it possible for all amateurs to fish in troubled waters.

We must at last think about music as good craftsmen might think about their craft. Each craft imposes an obligation. No tailor or shoemaker, expecting payment for his work, would dare to justify its short-comings by an accident, or by the caprices of his mood. No decent performer of music will forgive himself wrong notes, lapses of memory, or the loss of rhythmical balance.

If musical creation is acknowledged to be the highest form of our art, wherein, may I ask, is its superiority? If in "creation" the notion of mistakes is not admitted, if it is free from any kind of obligation, is it not then the easiest, the most accessible, and therefore the lowest form of artistic craft?

Let the modernist composers, the laureates of contemporary symphony and concert platforms, think a little while of their creation as of a craft, but not in the sense of worrying as to how they may personally profit by it today; rather in the sense of being concerned as to whether it can at all be viewed as a craft of good quality, responsible, durable, and vital, and whether it is not simply an accidental profession accidentally suggested by the accidents of contemporary life and floating on its surface like bubbles in water? The good quality and the vitality of the craftsmanship of many (often completely unknown) composers who are heard on the platforms of movie theatres, music halls, bars, and cabarets, is usually far more certain. From these places we sometimes hear the sounds of music, though not serious, and not sufficiently intense (as it befits art) but nevertheless quite intelligible and often done with talent and mastery (as it befits a craft).

Sometimes one involuntarily begins to think - may be many real musicians are hiding in these back yards of our art, who have failed to adapt their talent to the demands of fashionable symphonic platforms? And still a sadder thought - may be many musicians are hiding at home in silence, having extinguished their talent, because they have not understood how to adapt themselves to the demands of the great courts of contemporary music or to its backyards?

THE DISCORDANCE

If all our fundamental musical elements had been ousted from the practice of contemporary modernists, we would have nothing else to do but to recede from this new alien type of art. But alas, we are the witnesses of a deliberately wanton confusion and fraudulent cuts in these elements such as can appear to man only in the most fantastic nightmares! Unfortunately many are prone to interpret raving as positive self-oblivion, and hysterics as inspiration, and therefore let themselves get into these states. But let us not relinquish ourselves to it. Let us try to conjure up our will (here it is far more appropriate than the "invention" of themes and new laws), let us call to our aid our consciousness (so necessary for all accidents), in order to escape from this nightmare.

The works of the majority of progressive "modernists" have the unusual capacity of spurring on to analysis even those of us who never had any inclination for it. Let us respond to this challenge! This new, strange music systematically eliminates the fundamental senses of our common language, it criticizes them by its whole existence; therefore let us also not be afraid of criticizing such an obviously critical music. The greater part of the formations of this music are calculated to test the endurance and the capacity of our ear-drums, so let us oppose at last to these ear-drums our inner musical ear, which alone may be termed musical, because it does not absorb everything! These new, strange formations, being completely irresponsible to anything whatsoever, have attributed to themselves, as a pseudonym, the title of dissonances, which, as we all know, occupy in harmony a very responsible and therefore honourable position - so let us call these irresponsible formations, in accordance with the tuning of our common lyre, simply DISCORDANCES.

And if anyone asks us, when we refuse to accept contemporary discordances, the everlasting and invariable question: where is the boundary line that divides a dissonance from a discordance? - let us also ask him: is the existence of such a boundary line at all admissible? If not, all musical

creation is not worth talking about, since it is then placed not only beneath any craft, but even beneath all criticism. But if this boundary line is admitted, though it be difficult to find, let us request, in the name of the humanity of the language of our art, that these boundary lines be approached with a greater care, since the musical word, no less than any other word, operates in the world in spite of the fact that to the majority this operation seems to be little perceptible.

A discordance is simply an accidental formation, not an "accidental harmonic formation", but simply an accident without any harmonic image. It is, as it were, the accidental offspring of traditional harmony and of "howling success", which has inherited from harmony only the notation, and from howling success both a will to success and a predilection to noise.

A discordance is an exploded dissonance. When a good singer relinquishing himself to his spontaneous emotions and inspiration, increases his voice to a fortissimo, his voice neither breaks nor impresses us with a disagreeable harshness. But when the same singer only desires to astonish us by the power of his voice, or when he is simply constrained to drown out the whole orchestra, his voice breaks and no longer gives us any pleasure.

The discordance is a former dissonance, or a dissonance which at some time or another served the inspired song and in its culmination gave us joy by its beauty; but now this discordance has jumped out of the song, like the screeching crow of a cock, for it has decided to astonish us by its own power and to drown out a number of other dissonances,

Thus the discordance is not derived from the real substance of dissonance, but one that is misunderstood or distorted. For the substance of dissonance we mistook only the effect which it produced on us, only its dynamics. The dissonance opened up before us endless perspectives of modulation, but the discordance has covered them with an impenetrable fog.

Modulation, as the encirclement of tonality, is a movement in time. The discordance, as a vertical formation, is primarily nothing but a modulation compressed into a chord, i.e. a shift in the plane of time. Thus for the substance of modulation was mistaken something, that is merely a departure from tonality, a denial of it. But in denying tonality we have also robbed the notion of tonality of all sense.

In making our way through the material of the new, progressive, music, we cannot confine ourselves to a criticism of discordances - these incompatible, irresponsible, vertical formations. We must deal still more attentively with the inappropriately simple horizontal coordination of our consonant and dissonant chords, which we meet at every step with the modernist. This inappropriate simplicity of coordination, these inert, mechanical, parallel shifts of the chords that are known to us (which in themselves are quite intelligible) debase the fundamental senses of the musical language and turn our art into an empty amusement, into simple trickery.

Latterly one has begun to talk about a return to simplicity, about some sort of "neo-classicism". First, this is merely talk, and talk always interferes with music. Secondly, those "*neos*" and "*isms*" make us suppose in spite of ourselves that this return was dictated by the demands not of the muse, but of the fashion, that ever-appearing fashion which by its shifts and turns is only capable of leading art into deadlocks and labyrinths. Finally it would be well to understand, once and for all, that to no one but the uninitiated can modern music appear artistically complex, and therefore its return to simplicity cannot but arouse the question: What simplicity? To the simplicity of triads?

This might even sound like Wagner (see p. 108). But Wagner never interrupted his connection with triads (the majority of his leitmotifs and themes are brilliant examples of this connection). Wagner never interrupted his connection with any element of music; he never permitted himself any cuts in the senses (it was precisely for this reason that he was reproached by the majority of opera-lovers), and in his

everlasting desire to coordinate the senses arrived at the unheard of, titanic idea of converting, collecting the opera (opera, i.e. the plural of opus) and even operas (The Ring), into one musical whole, into one form… But, of course, had he not possessed this everlasting, uninterrupted gravitation towards unity, he, too, could not have suddenly found the centre, i.e. simplicity.

Sheer simplicity even geniuses cannot approach. Only the gods live in it. For us mortals sheer simplicity will always appear as emptiness, and sheer complexity as an accumulation.

In order to save contemporary music, to tune up its lyre in our imagination, every one of us must eliminate from his creative practice, and erase from the fashionable handbooks of harmony all the atonal and polytonal chords that our inner ear cannot embrace.

And if we want to return to the simplicity of triads, we must remember that the music of triads, their coordination, is a still more closed-in, strictly limited discipline, than the harmony of genuinely flowering dissonances which appeared to us to be too limited, and from which we departed into the shoreless sea of discordances. No single chord needs such purity of intonation, such an accurate tuning, as the simple triad!

The simplest spiritual songs are the most canonical. And therefore, before returning to the simplicity of triads, it would be well for us to undergo a complex study of the complexity of coordination, instead of simply "creating" simplicity.

PART TWO

The Mirror of the Muse

(Goethe)

Once the muse in her eagerness followed the
brook as it hurried,
Sought at dawn for a calmer spot that would
serve her as mirror.
Tossing and tumbling the stream rushed on,
and never was quiet,
Never her image was clear; the goddess turned
away in anger,
Then the brook, with scornful derision, called
to her, mocking:
"You are afraid, of course, of the truth you
would see in my mirror,"
But she already stood at the farthest end of
the lake,
Looking with joy at her figure, and fitting
the wreath on her brow,

(Translated by Henry S. Drinker)

This poem is supremely inspired and at the same time completely accurate in its definition of the relationship of the Muse to Fashion. The Muse, caretaker of the spirit and the everlasting laws of art, adorning her head with a wreath and seeing her reflection in the ruffled waters of a rapid brook, turns away in anger from that distorted mirror. The latter - the mirror of the unceasingly changing idle fashion - is the unsteady, passing, truth of the present day, the surface of our times. The divine image of the muse finds its true reflection only in the distant and calm waters of the deep lake – eternity.

We, contemporaries, must once and for all rid ourselves of the cowardly self-esteem that prompts us to conceal our genuine incomprehension or even confirmed rejection of present-day artistic phenomena. We are afraid of the blunders

of our forefathers who criticized the men of genius living in their time. But we forget that this adverse criticism, having in no way deprived us of the heritage of those geniuses, was at the same time a necessary ingredient in the education of a whole generation. Every frank confession of an inability to understand something is an unmistakable symptom of a desire to understand at all.

A frank incomprehension compels us not to take part in the incomprehensible, just as much as understanding something makes us already involved in it, and therefore all those who misunderstood or criticized, e.g. Beethoven or Wagner, have, in spite of this historical "blunder", rendered a service to their generation, if in no other way, at least by having spared it a poor performance or a cheap imitation of the work of those geniuses. And, generally speaking, to learn to shoot one should not be afraid to miss, for history has shown us that all these mistakes of rejection or acclaim can neither make nor unmake a true genius. But while rare mistakes of acclaim will not create true geniuses, but rather false idols, too frequent mistakes of wholesale acclaim (giving rise to legions of false idols), is already a far more dangerous historical blunder than all rejections, since it gradually breaks up our common artistic faith into innumerable sects. We must temporarily forget our individual little paths, in order to find the common path of art. We must for a time abandon our individual and group dialects in order to find a musical language common to all.

An artist's mistrust can be twofold: of himself and of his art. The former is inevitable, the latter pernicious. We cannot avoid being swayed by doubts as to how we compose, how we serve music; this is self-criticism a testing of ourselves that only increases our watchfulness in serving art. But if we begin to doubt music itself, and stop serving it, we *ipso facto* cease being musicians. "What is music and what is not?" This question, often asked by many contemporaries, already contains a doubt of music itself. And would it not he better for its "servants" and "admirers" to resign, for what

are they serving or admiring? Themselves? Their talent? In our epoch which idolizes self-sufficient "talents", "talents" - spoiled by success - instead of coordinating themselves with music, as was done previously, now identify themselves with it.

Our criticism of our musical epoch, just as former criticism of former epochs, must not be viewed otherwise than as a collective self-criticism. If the collective criticism of former epochs has sometimes been too severe towards its "talents", it does not follow that our talents should be exempt from all criticism. We must get rid of this habit of expressing our opinion as follows: "On the one hand it is impossible not to admit …… but, on the other hand, it seems to me that to a certain extent … This careful beating about the bush of cowardly bourgeois critics has a ludicrous pretension to being "objective". In other words: "Since we are by nature so subjective, which is unseemly in these enlightened times, let us be objective for the sake of decency".

Can people really imagine that by starting with a subjective lie they can ever reach an objective truth? Criticism must return to the primary words yes or no. If these two words are the only ones that can exorcise the artist's material in his process of creation, in deciding him to determine what colours or images he needs; if the artist must himself present to the public not the process, but the result of his choice, why then should criticism be allowed to present its doubts instead of stating its opinion?

"The voice of the people is the voice of God". This sounds very much like a confusion of the notions of collectivity and objectivity, fate and God, what is and what should be, existence and being. This is a most dangerous proverb if it is used to justify existing conditions, and still more dangerous if we use it for looking not only back but forward, that is if the voice of the majority appears to us also as the voice of a prophet pointing out the ways into the future.

Listen, scrutinize, find your way independently to the senses of music. Don't look around. Save your musical ear before it is too late.

The intonation of the musical senses is in any case no less important than the intonation of our inanimate instruments. The ear that can determine only the pitch of separate, and hence not musical, sounds, does not yet constitute absolute musical hearing, as it is commonly called by musicians.

1. MODERNISM

What is "modernism"? The fashion for fashion. "Modernism" is the tacit accord of a whole generation to expel the Muse, the former inspirer and teacher of poets and musicians, and install Fashion in her place as autocratic ruler and supreme judge. But since only what has been begotten by Fashion can go out of fashion, modernists are eternally the victims of her caprices and changes, victims that are constantly doomed by her to "epigonism"[26]) The fear of this "epigonism" compels the cowardly artist to run after Fashion, but she, the artful wench, does not stop in her flight, and always leaves him behind.

Thus, in our unseemly deference to fashion, in our fashion for fashion, which has lasted over half a century, we have come to resemble backward provincial artists. And it is strange that this provincial fashion for fashion reigns most

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[26] An "epigone" (Greek) is one who was born later. In German and Russian art criticism the terms "epigone", "epigonism" are used to denote a dilution, by a later generation of artists, of an idiom that, at its first appearance, struck the taste of the bourgeois at too powerfully concentrated and unpalatable. In this sense such violently "new" composers, as Schumann, Chopin, Borodin, and Debussy were mercilessly imitated by a host of mediocrities following in their trail. [A.J.S.]

securely and despotically in the progressive capitals of the world!...

Fashion has always existed in all fields, but a fashion for fashion in art has appeared only in our time. The concept of fashion does not sound too abstract for anyone, but the concept of the muse to the majority of our contemporaries appears an antiquated romantic "abstraction". The men of genius in the past thought differently - the muse was to them a teacher, an inspirer, a friend, while fashion was an empty sound.

The musical army of modernistic creation is made up of nothing but "leaders". In no way can they be called representatives of music. Every representative of something acts not only in his own name and for himself; in his actions there is bound to be some coordination of himself with whatever he represents. But the leaders of contemporary modernism act only in their own names and for themselves, and hence their actions are characterized by that primitive determination when a man has to stand up for himself.

What is frightening in our days is not that great artists, as always, form a considerable minority, but that this minority has no influence in life and the ways of art, and also that an overwhelming majority has declared the line of least resistance to be the only right way.

Goethe speaks of the peculiar trait in human nature which makes us little interested in the depths hidden underneath the surface of the waters, and impatient for the moment when the surface will cover itself with a crust of ice, in order to be able to skate on it with complete abandon.

These words are applicable to any well-knit majority in all fields and epochs. Contemporary society which is so proud of its preoccupation with all sorts of depths, of its psychological analysis, of its revolutionary daring, is not aware that in reality it is merely skating on a crust of ice, which has formed itself (alas!) not only over the depths of the clear

waters of great art, but also over the big puddle on the surface of the irresponsible "creations" of the "geniuses of yesterday.

The task of our epoch consists therefore primarily in an attempt to melt the ice, both of the surface of great art, as also of the contemporary puddle.

Fashion is a synonym for inertness. People await what fashion will pronounce, and then repeat it. We must forget about all fashions that have ever existed, and set to work testing our artistic conscience. It is necessary to remove the crust of ice on the surface of art, but at the same time beware of ruffling its waters, for only through clear waters can we see the bottom, where the laws of art are hidden - the collective conscience of its great representatives…

An artist to whom art itself is no less dear than his own personal "creations", should not be afraid of the warning contained in the basic laws and boundaries of art. "Only in self-limitation can the master he recognized", These words of Goethe have long ago condemned those who either through lack of talent or through inertia have gone the way where all is permitted, rather than take warning and impose limitations.

The music of the extreme modernists is like the "Comedy of Errors", and their theory is like a theory of errors. Errors of theory (and of practice) have been observed before, but no THEORIES OF ERRORS have been known to exist in former times.

Prohibition (as an indication of boundaries) is a lawful convention. But a prohibition of all prohibitions, being a convention to the second power, is obviously lawless.

Living creation is always more flexible than any theory, But the notion of flexibility presupposes also the power that

simultaneously wields and controls that flexibility. This and only this is the law.

Where thought and feeling confer with each other, you will find the artistic conscience. Inspiration comes, where thought is saturated in emotion, and emotion is imbued with sense.

Emotion is usually opposed to mastery. When one speaks of the emotion of a genuine artist, how can it be in conflict with the mastery of his art? For must not true artistic emotion lead the artist into his art, and not out of it?

Sometimes it seems that we have completely estranged ourselves from the emotions and thoughts that are alone capable of begetting and fructifying art.

The musical language of the extreme modernists consists of the same scraps of former root senses that are artificially combined into one word, as contemporary names of institutions, political parties, patent medicines, etc. One hears a new word, and yet cannot get at its fundamental meaning.

Many great masters used to determine their way after they had decided that other ways were inaccessible to them, e.g. many masters of opera apparently could not hold their thoughts in check otherwise than by clinging to a canvas of dramatic action. And, conversely, for many masters of instrumental symphonic forms, dramatic action is either an unbearable shackle, or an insufficient exorcism (restraint) for their musical thought. But the right to compose non-music for want of a specific musical talent is the privilege solely of contemporary "extreme" modernists.

It is wrong to identify the past with age, and the present and future with youth. For if we speak at all of time, its passage is from youth to age, and not vice versa. However, the domain of the spirit has no idea of time. Therefore when we think of our youth, our soul is rejuvenated, but when we

merely wear clothes that beseem youth, e.g. just follow the fashion, we merely affect youth, but don't get younger.

The paths of modernistic musical "creation"

The majority of contemporary modernists (especially the younger ones) imagine musical language (all language of art, for that matter) to be an ordinary everyday language, as a universal gift of human nature, a physical tongue that is always at our disposal. They ignore the fact that the greatest masters of music and literature, by silent contemplation and hard labour, earned their right to speak anew, every time they embarked on a new task.

It seems as if many young modernist composers have never even attempted to pronounce an ordinary phrase that is musically sensible.

But there is also another category of modernist: these are the cases when a composer has obviously learned to handle musical material in an accepted way; he knows the technique of constructing ordinary phrases, sentences, periods, but not having penetrated into the deeper senses of these constructions, he has not understood their spirit, he is unable to inspire them, or be himself inspired by them; he does not see the perspective of their development.

Such a modernist composer always begins by writing "well-mannered" music, but having once earned respect for his accepted stock of "words" and having realized that this stock will not last for a long conversation, he begins to make use of musical interjections or to form new "words" from scraps of musical senses or simply from the musical alphabet. These new "words", though unintelligible, pass for a new language on the strength of the former respect for their inventor.

And when this unintelligible language begins to tire the public and make it impatient, the composer recalls "old times", and, to regain the former respect, composes some minuet in the old "habitual" manner.

By this I do not mean the "haut style" of the classical dance which we have for instance in Tchaikovsky's intermezzo for

the *Pique Dame* and in Bizet's *Arlesienne*. In such a stylization there is not a shadow of imitation. Both in Tchaikovsky and in Bizet the old dance is animated by an individual content. This is genuine living form and not a dead scheme. In such an animation of the forms belonging to remote epochs the mystery of genuine creation comes out all the stronger.[27)]

Under the term habitual style we have to understand an imitation of dead schemes, formulae, terms of speech, which in its drabness of contents and imperfection of detail, is like the task of a pupil.

These two categories are really most typical of the majority of "modernists".

The third category presents the most baffling and painful question. Here we find musicians who are by nature endowed with a first-class musical apparatus and have acquired an enormous technique, in other words have achieved perfect mastery over this apparatus. But they seem to lack all faith in the reason of music, in a musical *logos*. Their musical apparatus seems to exist *per se*, while their creative practice is in no wise connected with it. When they begin to create they turn away from the reason and are seized by madness.

But this is not that artistic intoxication which sets in when the reason and emotion are satisfied, when the artist is inebriated by them.

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[27] *In justice to some modern composers, it must be said that precisely in this "animation" of old forms they have succeeded even to a greater extent than either Bizet or Tchaikowsky. The 19th c. had only a limited capacity for understanding bygone historical epochs. But such works as Roger-Ducasse's "Sarabande" (1910) and Ravel's "Tombeau de Couperin (1917) are consummate masterpieces of stylization. However, neither of these composers falls under Medtner's category of those, who having uttered unintelligible things, suddenly "recall old times". [A.J.S.]*

Pushkin, inebriated by poetic reason and emotion, sang to it his "Bacchic Song", and by this song has defined, as no one else, the sacred meaning of reason.

No, this is the madness that sets in when one is deprived of reason, ceases to believe in it, and is thereby faced with the impossibility of testing one's work, and indulges in an arbitrary, haphazard play with musical sounds.

One might ask: "why not suppose that the impulse to this new creation lies in new emotions, ideas, experiences?" Nobody 'denies the new composers these high emotions, ideas, and experiences in the process of the composition of their inarticulate music. But such a supposition makes their carelessness and neglect of the musical language all the more provoking.

Art is in itself one of the loftiest emotions, ideas, and experiences of mankind. But it takes revenge on all who do not believe in it, and turns into madness every attempt to use it only as a means, no matter to what end.

Every musician who has observed that he does not succeed in saying anything new in the one and only language of our art, must attribute his failure to himself, and not to the language of music.

If we are unable to be silent at the proper time, we have certainly no right to mutilate our language by senseless experiments in the imitation of it.

We fail to notice nowadays that the so-called "revolutionism" of former men of genius was always counterbalanced by their conservatism.

Their "revolutionism" was for the most part unconscious, while consciously they were conservative, which fact is amply proved by the notions of "falseness", "mistakes", i.e. all those reminders of the law, existing in art, that have now become inadmissible.

And in all cases, when the "revolutionism" of former artists became more conscious, it was directed not at the fundamental senses, not at the laws of art, but at the routine of fashion, which at all times is normally established by the majority, that is by the mediocre and poor minds, and, as all routine, is more apt to vulgarize the substance of the law than to affirm it.

In this sense "revolutionism" against fashion, in spite of the character of protest, is deeply conservative in its nature, Fashion in art always begets routine. But formerly when there was no fashion for fashions (i,e, modernism), fashion was interpreted in precisely that way, as routine. The pointing out of routine was just such a pointing out of an error - i.e. of profanation. Yet nowadays the ignorant person appears to be the one who dares to make a revolution against fashion. Nowadays the revolutionists are the legions of mediocrities who deliberately cling to fashion, as to a revolutionary red rag, the purpose of which is to cover up their unconscious ignorance, that very middle-class ignorance, which is usually called conservatism, but is in reality simply a revolt of conservatory students.

In the last decades we have had a tendency to quote merely the "revolutionary" appeals of great musicians. Perhaps the explanation of this could be sought in the fact that the opposite quotations are obviously quite inconvenient for us. To find these latter one has to be impartial. Besides, if they happen to strike our eye less frequently, it is precisely because no musician ever thought of a struggle against the laws of his art, and therefore did not have to defend these laws before the public.

Let us recall what Wagner said two years before his death when looking through Palestrina and Bach. The very same Wagner who is usually quoted and remembered as a revolutionary in music, in reality by all his music, his harmony, showed his deepest connection both with Palestrina and with Bach and with the whole of music and all its laws, and last of all with the fundamental sense of harmony - the triad. "O was ist doch solch ein Dreiklang! Alles verschwindet fur

mich dagegen; wenn er wieder eintritt, so ist es nach allem Toben, Wuten, Irren, wie die Rückkehr van Brahma zu sich selbst..."[28] These words of Wagner pronounced after the composition of "Tristan" (*nach allem Toben, Wüten, Irren*), are a particularly eloquent answer to the question: what is real (not artificial) evolution? The movement of evolution is an eternal encirclement and not an eternal withdrawal. It is the movement of life around eternity. Evolution means both forward and backward, higher and lower, and finally (quite contrary to the opinion of those who identify it with progress, and love to use it as a justification for their continuous withdrawal from the centre) it means both better and worse, and we must say: the more natural the encirclement, the better; and conversely, the more deliberate the withdrawal, the worse.

For the contemporary majority the greatness of geniuses is measured by their revolutionism. This majority imagines that revolutionism lies in the destruction of the boundaries of art. In reality, however, geniuses appear to be revolutionary only because they have always possessed an infinitely greater insight into the deeper foundations of their art, than the majority. Penetrating to the very core of the fundamental senses and roots of their art, they thereby also acquired the capacity of a much wider development of it. While their greatness revealed itself most brilliantly when they were able to say the most inspired words in the simplest and most accessible language.

The simplest theme couched in the simplest harmony and swayed by the most primitive rhythm, and yet stamped by the inspiration and individuality of its author, is an example of the complexity of the mysterious and hallowed coordination of the individuality of the composer with the spirit of music and its deepest roots.

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[28] "O, what a marvel, such a triad! I feel as if everything disappeared against it; when it sounds again, it is, as if after all the madness and anger and fruitless search, Brahma returned to himself ... " [A.J.S]

But unfortunately, simplicity is not appreciated as an achievement, either by him who enjoys it only because any understanding of complexity is inaccessible to him or by him who having no bent whatsoever for simplicity', is "interested" only in complexity.

2. ADVENTURE and HEROISM in ART

The absurdity of the revolutionary notion "forward", as a popular slogan in art, is quite evident since every sincere lover of art will appraise its phenomena outside of the historical perspective. Every inspired and perfect work of art is always ahead of a dull and imperfect one.

A haphazard movement forward, solely for the sake of adventure and without any conclusions, is condemned even in life and strictly differentiated from true heroism.

Artistic heroism is always directed toward perfection. Here "forward" means along a path that points to perfection. Such paths we cannot discern in a future that as yet does not exist for us. Such paths are much clearer to us in the past than in the present, i.e. in ourselves,

And so, if we are at all to use this slogan "forward" we must bear in mind the beacons of great art that by their dazzling light ever illumine our path toward perfection. While our heroism must consist in a willingness to sacrifice any of our opuses whose wilful "originality" abnegates the single "origin" of art.

"Towards new shores", the slogan of the majority of the contemporary innovators, undoubtedly has a revolutionary and hence political character; Any slogan is more appropriate to politics than to art, the creative hearth of which is always the individual, and not the collective. It is tragically inevitable that the artist should be tied to his individuality. And so, the more he suffers from this tie, the stronger his drift is from himself towards the world and his neighbours, the more he must beware of saddling the world with any kind of slogans; every one of them will always be but his

individual creation, which in taking the form of a slogan, is forced upon the world in the shape of a general dogma.

"Towards new shores", When it becomes unbearable to live as of old - and live one must always - we perforce begin to think of how to live differently. This procedure is absolutely inapplicable to art. In art all things must always be experienced not in a new way but anew, in a process of everlasting renovation. Where this process of renovation has not taken place (whether it is creation or perception), there is no art.

If the secret of this everlasting renovation is lost, the intention to discover "the new shores" is just as much of a synthetic substitute as the invention of patent medicines for the rejuvenation of centenarians. "Towards new shores". But the shores are a boundary! Does not each river embank its own waters? So if we have grown accustomed to the banks of some river and they suddenly appear too narrow for us and we begin to crave for new banks, why do we think that those new banks, in their turn, will not appear too narrow after a prolonged sojourn in them? Or do we merely rejoice in all excesses that happen within the river-bed of our art, and, like curious passers-by, remain indifferent to the troubles of people who live on its banks? "Towards new shores". Doesn't this usually mean simply towards the *nearest* shore? All slogans are alien to inspiration. It does not stand in need of them. They lure artists mostly as a justification of their technical carelessness, of their inability to swim, and their desire to get ashore as quickly as possible.

Any deliberately designated new shore is very quickly turned into a common place, into a fashionable beach. Only the mysterious inspiration remains an eternally new shore.

We have drifted so far away from art that we borrow our slogans, terminology, and ideas not only from politics and science, but from technicians and even tailors. For instance, the words "inventiveness" and "fashion" are circulated with particular frequency among artists, and in these words there is always the same psychology, which is alien to art. For while technical discovery or tailoring fashion can abolish past discoveries and fashions, Chopin surely did not abolish Mozart, or Wagner Beethoven.

By applying to art criteria, terms, slogans alien to it, borrowed from life, and therefore more accessible to the uninitiated, we not only debase art like demagogues, but gradually substitute for the old criteria new ones, which have about as much bearing on it as, for instance, a yardstick on the taking of temperature, or a thermometer on the measuring of distance.

Every genuine artist is an autocratic ruler in the realm that is allotted to him in art, but the fact that his power is limitless does not mean that his realm is limitless. No matter how great the artist, or how unrepeatable the phenomenon of his individuality, he may not say · with Louis XIV, "*L' art c' est moi.*"

Great is Beethoven, and certainly everyone must acknowledge that Beethoven is great art, but - great art is not Beethoven. Art is Beethoven and all that was and all that may be in great art.

When after a long, loving contemplation of some particular phenomenon of art, even of Beethoven, we pass to another, for instance Mozart, we are invariably refreshed, and are even prone to draw the unjust conclusion that Mozart is greater than Beethoven. In our thoughts, we as it were, correct Beethoven by Mozart. In reality, however, we only pay tribute to the greatness of art in general, ever adding phenomena, one to another.

Such mental corrections of one genuine master by another are in reality not corrections at all, for the simple reason

that after an equally prolonged and loving contemplation of that other, we frequently revert to the first with a renewed strength of emotion.

But these changes in our feeling from one artistic phenomenon to another do not by any means indicate either fickleness in our general artistic perception, or fickleness or intangibility in the phenomenon itself. They mean only, either that our artistic perception has from contemplation imperceptibly turned into analysis, or that we have quite unconsciously transferred the centre of gravity of our contemplation from art, as it is reflected in the individual prism of the author, to that prism itself; we are simply tired, for the time being, of the individual atmosphere of the given author,

It is certainly not given to us to contemplate art and its principal theme otherwise than through the prisms of individualities, through the multiplicity of themes. But woe unto us if we perceive that multiplicity not as a variety of unity, but as a hopelessly heterogeneous plurality!

Whether anyone composes music after removing the obstacles of its laws and boundaries that exorcise matter, or in passively obeying the established laws as he would an order of the police department, i.e. having failed to establish them in his soul voluntarily, independently, individually, - it is all equally hopeless, equally a movement along the line of least resistance. What is strange, however, is that formerly the artistic police (criticism) enforced obedience to the laws in the name of the realm (music); while now the same police, utterly heedless of the realm, ordain the breaking of the laws in the name of artistic adventurers who are appearing on all sides. Such an alliance of the police with the adventurers deprives the latter even of that charm of personal courage by which youth is so easily swayed.

3. INFLUENCE and IMITATION

In criticizing works of art we always try to find in them traces of influence and imitation, and we often confuse these notions.

Influence presupposes a natural coincidence of the individual focuses of the one who exerts the influence and the one who undergoes it. Imitation presupposes an absence of the individual prism in the one who imitates.

The effect of influence is an important symptom of spontaneity, of something that is inborn, is a natural heritage, while imitation is a proof of helplessness, of lack of roots, of a misunderstanding of the substance.

Influence always starts from the substance, the contents, unity; imitation from details, from the coverlet (periphery), a misunderstood unity (emptiness).

All the great masters, the geniuses of art, have been subject to influence, while it is always the dullards, the apprentices, and the dilettantes by nature who imitate.

If an artist, who has been under the influence of kindred phenomena, suddenly begins to be conscious of this influence,[29]) he invariably falls into imitation.

And this is the way it happens: should he experience this influence as something positive, this influence itself will turn into a mechanical device, into imitation. But if he should experience this influence as a lack of independence that is insulting to his self-esteem and if he should attempt to cut himself adrift from the centre of this influence (centre of gravity), he, finding himself without any centre whatsoever, begins to imitate independence, originality.

Absolute originality in art is a hyperbole, for every musician first of all takes his descent from music itself, and secondly from some "school", some individual representatives of musical art, who more than others personify music to him.

The originality and wealth of the one common musical language enables those who have mastered it to bring out their own individuality. But those who have not mastered it, have also not found the key that opens the door to one's musical individuality, and are therefore doomed either to imitate

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[29] *Especially if it has been pointed out by critics who always look for similarity and influence.*

musical speech, or to copy models of others. Either procedure is equally a sign of musical epigonism.

In our times we often observe in the composing practice of different authors a combination of both procedures in the following succession: first a blind imitation (without influence) of the music of predecessors, then the same imitation (and also without the slightest influence!) of musical art in general.

But for some reason or other, this last type of imitation is nowadays generally called innovation. For some reason we see new paths in what is no more than play at music, such as up to now was tolerated only in nurseries (and then only behind closed doors!)

4. HABIT and DEXTERITY

The music of the extreme modernists often makes a morbidly repugnant impression on the unbiased listener. In such cases, in order to efface the painfulness of this impression, the doctors of music prescribe to the listeners an anaesthesia of their organs of perception by means of a medicine patented by life and tested by everybody - the HABIT. To many it may seem that this medicine has the right of citizenship in art also, i.e. real skill or dexterity in the use of artistic technique is identified by many with the daily habit. In reality such a dexterity (in creation as in performance, as in perception) is diametrically opposed to daily habit.

Habit is a passive adjustment. Dexterity an active overcoming of difficulties. Habit in art means losing one's capacity to discriminate, while dexterity intensifies one's ability to distinguish artistic truth from falsehood.

Habit is a necessary condition of daily life. But in art habit means the loss of primary intuitive feeling which should play a principal, leading role both in perception and in creation. However, even in life one cannot acquire any habit with impunity. But in art there is no habit that will not take its revenge. Whoever says: "I am used to the symphonies of Beethoven", or: "I am used to modernistic cacophony" merely

confesses to his inability to get excited about either, whether in a positive or negative way. In the creation of music it is still more damning: a person who is 'used' to writing music, writes it only with his hand or with his intellect.

Every artist or lover of art must reject with indignation this appeal to habit so frequent in our times, which is nothing but an appeal to that inertia which nowadays has come to replace more and more a loving gravitation toward the living sense, the "word" of art.

Habit is the stoppage that in art is tantamount to death. Technique and mastery in art do not represent a completed process. The definiteness of the centre of gravitation conditions also the incessant motion that surrounds it.

The completeness, i.e. perfection of a separate work of art, is merely a link in an uninterrupted chain, only one stage in the endless path towards perfection, only the expiration in the process of breathing.

When we speak about dexterity, about 'methods' of artistic technique or mastery, we must never identify method with manner. For manner is precisely the result of habit, while method is the result of an acceptance, an understanding of the senses of art.

Dexterous methods are the result of an unceasing attention to the lessons of the muse, the teacher. These lessons never stop. An interruption in them is likewise death.

An essential difference between habit, or manner, and dexterity, or method, is the absence in the former of the stamp of individual attention to the muse; therefore anyone can acquire a habit just as he can imitate a manner; but to imitate an individual artistic method is a fruitless affair. It is not somebody else's individual method and dexterity that we must study, but that attention to the muse through which they are acquired. The deeper that attention, the keener is the composer's self-criticism, and the more intangible, inimitable his style. And, conversely, the more superficial the attention to the muse, the stronger his self-complacency (which often reaches self-assertion and even self-

imitation) and therefore the more perceptible his "style". The elemental individuality of Beethoven is coupled with the greatest intangibility of his style. But in those cases when the individual style of the composer is easily definable, in a schematic way, we stand before a less pronounced individuality, or, perhaps, a less inspired work even of a great master.

5. CURIOSITY and ATTENTION

In our times the attention that is so valuable in artistic perception is often replaced by cold curiosity. We often hear such opinions as "What a curious rhythm!", "What a piquant harmony!", "What an interesting sonority".

Curiosity is a peep into something strange, alien, unknown. It presupposes an absence of connection with its object. And it doesn't seek this connection. Attention, on the other hand, presupposes an established inner connection between the observer and his object of attention. Curiosity is always directed towards separate details. It is always inclined to make cuts in the senses, while attention is directed to the depths of these senses and collects them into a whole, a unity.

Curiosity lingers on "interesting", "piquant" details and fails to notice how inappropriate they are. Attention, directed towards the essence of the theme and its development, determines at the outset only the appropriateness of details and therefore frequently rejects the most "interesting", "curious", "piquant" details, finding them inappropriate and preferring the simplicity of the fundamental senses. Curiosity is aroused only by the intellect and a craving for sensations. Attention is born of feeling, thought, wisdom. Attention is spontaneous, it is born of influence. It teaches us much. As a result of it we get our experience. Curiosity, free from any kind of influence and reaching out helplessly for the details, does not teach us anything. It can result only in experiments and imitation, Curiosity is an attribute of

capacities that are not controlled. The gift of attention is already an unquestionable talent.

The fact that something is "interesting" does not mean that it has an artistic value. Yet an interesting rhythm, a curious chord, may often be less appropriate and hence less valuable than the simplest. To convince oneself of this one need only look at the piano sonatas of Mozart with the accompaniment of Grieg. This accompaniment may seem to many, more "curious", "interesting", than the actual sonatas of Mozart. But its artistic value is infinitely smaller than that of the original, or of the works of Grieg himself.

6. EXPERIENCE and EXPERIMENT

Experience in art is a result that has been tested by contemplation and action, that is, by labour, while an experiment is merely an attempt from which no result can be guaranteed, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained". True: there is no harm in it for the experimenter himself, but if his experiments are made on the life of art, that life is distinctly endangered.

The artistic experience contains in itself an acknowledgement of the legitimate gravitation of complexity towards simplicity; the complexity of the artistic path leads to the simplicity of the artistic goal, while the experiment (which is *ipso facto* hostile to art) upsets the legitimate relation of complexity to simplicity. It is a simplified process that in art invariably leads into the wilderness of an unintelligible complexity.

"*The Gardener and the Philosopher*", a fable of the wise Kryloff[30]) tells us how the "philosopher" had to go without cucumbers since his digging was done more in books than in the earth (which was the gardener's book); he was interested

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[30] *Ivan Andreyevich Kryloff (1768-1844) is the Russian Lafontaine. "His fables are the heritage of the people whose book of wisdom they constitute". (Gogol) [A.J.S.]*

merely in the novelty of the experiment, and renounced the gardener's labour and the experience that comes with it,

In our perception the artistic truth is always simple, but the ways of reaching it are complex.

The artistic falsehood always seems complex to us, whereas the ways towards it are very simple and easy.

7. WORK and BUSINESS

We have to distinguish between business and work. There are people who are always busy and yet have no conception whatsoever of work; and, conversely, there are others who have devoted all their lives to work but are unable to convert it into business. However, this does not mean that work is fruitful only when it is turned into business. From a materialistic standpoint this is so, but in the spiritual domain work is always fruitful. In a material sense, business is more important, while work is only in the employ of business, as it were. In the spiritual realm, quite the opposite. Not without reason is the material "opus" of daily life designated by the term business, while the "opus" of the spirit (be it in science, philosophy, or art) is called work, composition. It is true that both these words - work and composition - have the meaning not only of an achievement, but also of the process of achievement, which only shows how true and accurate their application is to a spiritual task; for the spirit is endless and has in itself no point of achievement in the sense of termination. While the word business (like all that is material) sounds final. All the more pity that sometimes businessmen get engaged in scientific work and artistic composition.

In their cases the above terminology becomes inaccurate and involved. With his customary determination and time-saving devices (the principal sin in all work of the spirit) a typical businessman tackles musical composition, and since he is actuated by business impulses only, he arbitrarily accelerates the process of composition and just as arbitrarily

interrupts it. Such compositions, in the apt expression of S. I. Taneieff[31], "*do not end, but break off.*"

Whereas a real work of art never gives the impression of an interruption, but only that of a temporary rounding off in completion. The end of such a genuine composition, having as it were re-established its contact with the beginning, completes the encirclement of the theme.

And so one can further say about the musical works of business-people, about works that do not end but break off, that they have never even begun, for if at their beginning there had been a real musical theme and not a mere business impulse, we would have before us a curved line, and not an interrupted straight one.

Business-people often refer to an artist, who has messed up his affairs, as a loafer. But unfortunately the artists have not yet invented a corresponding designation for a typical businessman who has messed up a work of art.

It is true that art critics usually speak of such a work as being "laboured", but this is not sufficiently definite. It would be more accurate to call such a work, that has neither a beginning nor an end (neither an artistic impulse nor a goal) and betrays in reality merely a process of helpless searching, not a composition, but just composing. But for some reason nowadays every rambling, even though it has not yielded a work of art, is still called a composition.

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[31] *S.I. Taneieff (1855-1915), the great Moscow contrapuntist and teacher of composition, also a great lover of "bons mots", never tired to apply them, with biting sarcasm, to compositions and composers with "modernistic" tendencies. [A.J.S.]*

8. IMPRESSION and EVALUATION

In perception, just as in creation, there must be an interaction, a merger of feeling and thought, impression and evaluation. But instead of this merger we often observe a confusion. That is: contents that are alien to us make our evaluation of the form hostile, our criticism of it negative. Contents that are congenial to us shut our eyes to the defects or falsification of the form. And finally, contents that have struck us by their extraordinary freshness, their novelty of the individual atmosphere, make us presuppose, and even get an illusion of this novelty in technical, formal devices. Or conversely: a simple elementary form that can be grasped by the bare intellect, makes us insensible to a freshness and novelty of contents, and a complex formal technique to an absence or a triteness of the contents.

Anyone may share his impressions without attempting an evaluation; or analyze technical devices, leaving his impression of the contents undisclosed. But, unfortunately, both, bare impressions and one-sided technical analyses, very often make pretensions to being exhaustive evaluations of the whole artistic phenomenon.

9. TALENT and ABILITY

The present worship of self-sufficient gifts and talents is very much like the worship of self-sufficient riches, that is, the power of money irrespective of where this power is directed.

Talent at the outset imposes an obligation and does not acquit one from it. The notion of talent presupposes individual contents requiring an individual form. Yet a self-sufficient talent that has no other centre than the individuality of the author is far more uninhibited than the genuine talent that aside from circling merely around the individuality of the author, endeavours also to find a way of encircling art itself, and thereby a way to the soul of his fellow men. The comparative lack of restraint in a self-sufficient talent does not give us nearly the same impression of artistic freedom

as the bond that exists between the centre of unity in a genuine talent.

Abilities that have no centre whatsoever, that are devoid precisely of what they should be fitted for, are characterized by an extraordinary lightness and freedom from restraint. Uncentralized abilities have the peculiarity of developing with a breath-taking rapidity. They always multiply, meeting no resistance on their way. Whereas abilities that are controlled by talent tend to lose their strong impetus. They are restricted by an adaptation to a single goal.

A talented musician who tries his powers in the elementary forms of music ordinarily gets discouraged for two reasons: either he is able to achieve form, as a scheme, filling it with contents that are not his own, lapsing into the style of the models which he used in studying; or else he creates his own contents, which force him to depart not only from a given scheme, but from any form whatsoever. In the former case he begins to hate the alien style into which he has involuntarily lapsed. In the latter case he hates the obvious formlessness, the absence of any style in his contents.

We will exclude the possibility of an incipient musician finding his own absolutely novel form, having no connection with all the music that has existed before him. Such cases of self-birth have, of course, never existed. Let us return to the ordinary human case, which like all that is human, is accompanied by work, struggle, and therefore at times also by despair. This despair is quite understandable and legitimate, for to hate a permeation of one's work by an alien style on the one hand, and lack of form on the other, is a sign of genuine talent.

Somebody else's style is like somebody else's pen. The demand of a special form for one's contents always signifies a realization of the importance of the unity of the one and the other. The very feeling of despair points to a yearning for this unity.

A person who has only some ability and does not know how to apply it; who is therefore always carried away by the inert momentum of his ability; such a person does not know either

yearning or despair. Instead of despairing he will choose what is easier and simpler. Simplicity, which must be the goal of our achievement, he considers the means that he carries in his pocket. For him simplicity is emptiness; the medium in which he meets with no obstacles.

A person who has only some ability will either fail to notice that he is writing with somebody else's pen (stylus, style) and therefore go along the line of least resistance as far as imitation is concerned; or he will yield to the impetus of his contents and begin to invent forms appropriate to it. Such a person will never realize the fact that form and contents are found and not invented.

Having chosen the path of imitation, a person who has only some ability easily turns his back on all that has not acquired the stamp of "classicism" or "academicism". Having chosen the path of invention he denounces all classical music as a symbol of an antiquated art.

In both cases such a person is harmful. In the former case because he desecrates great art; in the latter because he abnegates it. In both cases form and contents are equally faked and thereby the complexity of their coordination in unity is lost.

If self-sufficient abilities were given the power to rule the world, it would be the best means to ruin it, i.e. plunge it into chaos. Uncorrelated plurality and diversity would. become a plurality of hideousness[32)].

10. CONTENTS and SUBJECT MATTER

We cannot visualize contents outside of form, just as form turns into a dead scheme the minute we consciously separate it from contents. Therefore whenever we directly

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[32] *Medtner's play of words is here untranslatable. The Russian "bezobraziye" means both a lack of form and, through that lack of form, also hideousness. The author suggests "adversity" vs. "diversity", but such puns do not usually come off in another language. [A.J.S.]*

approach a living work of art, the two above notions will automatically merge into one.

Musical contents are ineffable. Musical form is nothing else than musical contents directed towards our musical consciousness.

A great many people are inclined to call rational any art that is incarnated in a clear and definite form (melody, harmony, structure). While chaotic form seems to them to embody the irrational moment in art. In music such a view is absolutely untenable.

The contents of music, indefinable through words, demand the most clear-cut form in sounds. While the contents that can be expressed in words and are in reality only the subject matter of music, often disturb, violate the musical sense and make musical form inaccessible to our musical consciousness. In many contemporary musical works in which the contents are nothing but an everyday subject matter, the muse, from a queen, has turned into a cook, brewing a hodge-podge from what formerly were musical senses.

On the other hand the contents of the Beethoven symphonies, though ineffable and irrational to the point of intoxication, have become acceptable to our musical consciousness, thanks to the divine clarity and precision of the musical form. The subject matter is a subject (servant) both of the contents and of the form. As a subject it has a right to citizenship in music and in any art. But woe if the subject matter begins to dictate its conditions, where its business is only to be silent, i.e. be absent. Submit it must always. No matter how beautiful the subject matter in itself, any aspiration on its part to be treated as contents or as form, makes the work of art valueless.

But there are also subjects that are so repulsive in themselves that their very presence (not to speak of their domination) renders the work of art valueless.

Subject matter (as opposed to form and contents) always appeals only to our consciousness, and so if by its ugliness it

arouses repugnance, we cannot give ourselves up to a contemplation of the whole work.

However, there are certain subjects which in themselves have nothing repulsive, but which become so when used in art. For this reason music and poetry are particularly fastidious in their choice of subject matter. There are no limits to the musical and poetic qualities of contents, forms, images. But when it comes to subject matter, these qualities are far from being equally limitless, and a violent broadening of these boundaries is an equal profanation of music and poetry and of the subjects themselves. The most respectable subject of a political or scientific character may become a mere mockery when enclosed in the framework of a musical or poetic song. But when music or poetry have succeeded in transforming the images of such subjects into its own images, and its own forms, what we are confronted by, is no longer subject matter, but artistic images and forms.

11. "PROGRAM" MUSIC

Many are inclined to assign to the realm of program music just about every piece that has not a purely musical title (sonata, rondo, prelude), but one describing its character or mood (berceuse, reverie), or one which may even have been borrowed, for greater clarity, from some well-known literary work. In reality, however, program music is only music in which the form itself and contents are dictated and justified by a certain program or subject matter. Thus the very strict sonata form of Beethoven's Coriolanus (a title which reflects merely the heroic mood, and not the historic subject of Coriolanus) precludes any possibility of assigning this work to the category of program music, and one might far rather suspect some program which Beethoven had in mind when he constructed some of the forms in his last sonatas and quartets that have no program heading.

As a matter of fact, even the whole song literature that would always seem to have a certain program in its texts may belong to the domain of program music, or may be pure music, as the expression goes, i.e. the poetic text may beget

a purely musical song which flows along, sometimes uniting itself with the text, but never forsaking its own musical bed, Or the same text may not beget any song, melody, or any musical form whatsoever. It may merely serve as a canvas for musical declamation or as an illustration of separate and mostly external points such as the trills of a nightingale, the rustle of the water, or the howling of the wind. The music of such songs, that is entirely guided by the text and has no self-sufficient musical sense or contents, naturally belongs to the domain of program music, since in writing it the musician, like a schoolboy, was merely taking down a dictation of the poetic text.

12. DE GUSTIBUS NON EST DISPUTANDUM

TASTE, that occupies a paramount place in the domain of the laws of art, loses its importance and even becomes a negative factor when attempting to determine these laws. It has quite enough to do even within the limits of the law. For we see instances of an inexhaustible freedom of choice within those limits in the fact itself of the endless variety of musical art up to our times.

Taste is capable of strengthening or weakening the pleasure we derive from some special traits of the subject, but never of determining its objective substance or value.

"Tastes differ" - this does not mean at all that we cannot make taste a matter of dispute out of respect for it. It merely means that taste is not worth talking about, that it is even unbecoming to talk about it, when the issue is not the pleasure that we derive from various artistic phenomena, but the determination of their rank and category.

For most people's taste a musical comedy is sweeter than a Beethoven symphony, a Vaudeville show more amusing than a Shakespeare tragedy; but this has not prevented humanity from being in agreement about the comparative category of these phenomena. The category of spiritual significance has won over those of "sweeter" or "more amusing".

Everyone has his predilections of taste. Every one of us is sometimes in a mood to relax on what is sweeter or more amusing. But every one of us must admit that our predilections OF taste have a right to exist only when we ourselves have no particular predilection FOR our present taste, and recognize that our temporary desire for rest is not a gravitation towards the Spirit.

The right to like or dislike is inalienable in artistic perception, it is even sacred, as a kind of incantational circle which determines the individual being, but to like must not mean to be blind to defects, just as to dislike must not blind us to the virtues. Anyone, for instance, who cannot stand the "poseur" in the great Liszt, has a perfect right to dislike some of his works, but a denial of the beauty and power of Liszt's musical speech would amount to a misapprehension of the language of music as a whole,

"Tastes differ" - this means only that looking for a complete coincidence in matters of taste is fruitless and even harmful, whenever we are seeking a coordination of plurality and unity; that absolute agreement in taste is a domestic, intimate matter; but over and above our taste there is something that we must love and value much more than our taste itself.

If personal taste is a highly doubtful criterion in the evaluation of individual authors or works, it becomes a positively destructive factor when it deigns to evaluate the senses and elements of musical language. Contemporary criticism, instead of being a criticism of the work in question, is often a criticism of music in general. One critic objects to triads, another one to chords of the dominant seventh. One detests the chromatic, another the diatonic scale. One is opposed to square (even bar) formations, another to any kind of sustained metre at all. One will put away a work, because, having barely opened it, he ran across a protracted figuration; another because his eye had fallen on a couple of sequences. And the dislike of it is not confined to one particular work, but to all arid sundry occasions.

All this is more like a contortion of taste than like actual criticism. Such idiosyncracies instinctively lead one to wonder whether in his childhood one such critic may not have been hit on the head with a sequence, as with a rattle, and another with a cadence, and still another with music as a whole. And yet the effect of such "blows" which the critic may have received in his childhood, is passed on to the young composers whom he criticizes. As if to revenge himself for his own blow, the critic hits the young composer with the same sequences or square bar formations.

And so, instead of getting independently to the substance of bar formation or sequences, the poor youth who has been hit begins to invent extra bars; in order to avoid the square-cut pattern he tries to break up the chain of the sequences that have formed in his spontaneous imagination. All such invention invariably results in superfluities, all such breaking up, in cracks or holes. These superfluous elements and holes are far more apparent to a critic who has not been hit in his childhood than the sequences and square-cut formations to the one who has.

It is high time that some plaster be invented to heal all these bumps, since prolonged practice in inventing and breaking up by a whole generation, makes all its music superfluous, non-existent, and creates a condition very similar to a huge hole in the history of music.

Our individual taste often prevents us from relishing certain details, even in a composer whom we love, but if these details happen to derive from the individual taste of the author, if our rejection of a composer is the result of a conflict of tastes, the whole thing is not worth talking about; *de gustibus non est disputandum*.

The titanic form-contents and structure of Beethoven's works (his horizontal harmonies) are intended not for our taste, but for our spirit and intellect. And if our taste is at times disturbed by some momentary things, microscopic details of his vertical chords, we must not permit ourselves to dwell on such moments, first because he himself doesn't

dwell on them, and secondly because even such moments, with Beethoven, never constitute any cuts in the senses.

And if they seem to us a rupture of taste, we must remember that an artist of genius has least in common with a chef, and anyone listening to him must get rid of his gourmet habits. And finally it has to be borne in mind that a complete merger of individualities is unattainable in matters of taste and attainable only in the spirit.

In our epoch taste has become the principal criterion. But this is not half the real trouble. The trouble is that our artistic taste has been brought up of late not by feeling and thinking, but by sensation and cold calculation. Thus in criticizing we first demand unheard of sensations, or else an excitement of idle thought i.e. our "unemployed" intellect that is anxious to find some occupation. What we require at all cost is not a definite work of art, not even a definite program for it (in the manner of the old naive dilettantes), but its definite problem.

Every contemporary artist is for some reason compelled to be a purveyor of unheard of problems, and woe to him if he should suddenly fall out of his role and forget to bring out in each new work of his the current problem of his art.

We are afraid of any precision in musical themes and the form-contents of music and even in the fundamental senses of the musical language; and, instead, we saddle our art with problems that by their very nature exclude a creative achievement, and replace the latter by theoretical research. No art can exist in an atmosphere of a world contest for a universal cataclysm.

13. The PROBLEMATICISM of CONTEMPORARY ART

All those "isms" -devil's tails that have grown on our conceptions of art - are nothing but preconceived problems. The "progressive" art of our times, having lost its real centre of gravity, has begun to rotate around all sorts of problems. But this new, arbitrary, centre can never be solid, and thus we are constantly running to and fro. All our concepts, such as: individuality (originality), reality (truthfulness),

symbolization (a mystical, spiritual meaning) etc, are of value in art only when they are naive, unconscious, spontaneous!

Every artist who contemplates his originality, his truthfulness, his mystic depth, puts all these conceptions in quotation marks, and by forcing them on others, makes them, *eo ipso*, nauseating.

Moreover, if he confines the problem of his creation to only one of those "isms", he obviously simplifies his cult of art, for art demands in an equal measure originality, and truthfulness, and spiritual meaning. A creator of genius combines in himself all those qualities. Is it possible, then, that the "realists", "symbolists", "impressionists", "expressionists" consider themselves the originators of some new, as yet unknown, principles in art? Is it possible that the symbolists of the turn of the century[33)] could be more symbolical than Pushkin or Goethe? True symbolism is not a QUALITY of thought, but the DEGREE of the spiritual penetration of that thought.

If there is any kind of "problem" to be posed in art, the sole problem of every epoch should be the preservation of a continuous connection with the great past. In our contest for a universal cataclysm, in our anxiety to "create an epoch", we break off all connection with past epochs. And when we notice that nothing has come of our endeavours, we begin to look back and instinctively search for the cut-off thread.

But it is precisely this "problem" of finding the cut-off thread, modest as it seems, that is infinitely harder and more complicated than all other pretentious problems.

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[33] The reference is here to the symbolist movement in Russian poetry: Vladimir Soloviyoff, Mereshkousky, Blok end Byely. [A.J.S.]

While the preservation of the thread makes every artist extremely up to date in relation to the given epoch (age) of his art, the search for little fragments of it makes him lapse into the dotage of past epochs. This literal dotage shows itself in the fact that in spite of the considerable age of his own epoch, he begins to imitate the outward methods of younger and more child-like epochs.

We fail to notice that in art every mature age is a childhood in relation to a future generation, and that we have a right only to this childhood. This genuine eternal childhood is accessible to us only if we preserve the eternal connection with the past.

Of all existing ENTERTAINMENTS, musical art is the most unfortunate, inactive, uninteresting. The true function of music is not to entertain or distract, but to attract, collect, hypnotically concentrate the feelings and thoughts of the listener. This does not mean that our muse invariably has a stern brow. It means only that neither its joys nor its sorrows, nor even its brow itself, may be beheld by those who look for entertainment. She turns away from those who by their nature are not attracted to her. She punishes with severe boredom those who seek in her but the excitement of idle thought, and in their idle thought wander past her brow, past her themes. To this it can be retorted that former great composers - Bach, Haydn, Mozart - being employed by the princes of this world and fulfilling their orders, in a sense had to entertain them. No. If their work was flawless as a fulfilment of the princes' orders, it was also flawless to the point of saintliness from the point of view of the command of their muse. By their symphonies, minuets, and contredances, they also moulded the musical tastes of their employers: and whenever the princely orders did not coincide with the command of the muse, or when the taste of employers could not be moulded, the masters looked out among the princes for other, better, employers and students.

But we have turned from the muse to fashion. In other words, having forfeited the centre of unity of music itself,

and directed ourselves to the plurality of the variegated tastes of the masses, we have unconsciously begun to fulfil many of the latter's orders. We have gradually lowered our art to the leve1 of idle entertainment. But having noticed that even as an idle entertainment it has begun to lose its efficacy, we, like drowning persons, cling to the debris of the ship that we ourselves have scuttled, i.e. such debris, as is light enough to come up to the surface of the ocean of life. But we catch, like at a straw, not only at the debris of our ship - the scattered senses of a formerly unified music; we catch at anything that we can sight on the ocean of life. We entertain a bored public by concert programs with analytical notes, done in a rough and ready way; by biographical data, mostly of an anecdotal nature; by portraits of the composers and executants; by publicity matter about the self-same composers and executants that differs but little from the advertisements of soap or cream that are also included in the same program.

We entertain the public by concert talks that are also intended to explain the piece just played. For such illustrations we use biographical facts, anecdotes, psychology, history, and so on. All of this, instead of educating the public musically, deprives it of the last vestige of faith in the original self-sufficient domain and power of our art.

Specialized musical training is an ordeal that only the specially-gifted is in a position to sustain. By undergoing this ordeal he strengthens his natural musical gifts. One who is less gifted cannot stand as much special training and often entirely loses any gifts he may have in the process.

The public that merely likes music, should not have any conception of musical THEORY, since that would merely distract it from the perception of musical IMAGES. But there are also non-musical images which would distract the public no less than musical theory. What then must we understand by an elementary musical receptivity?

Certainly only the capacity of experiencing music directly; and this definition applies to the specialist and to the general public alike.

If the non-specialist can at first directly experience the main images, the melodies (themes), it will be easier for him to work his way from these themes to a perception of the whole, than for the dull specialist who has put on the spectacles of the theoretician from the start, and can see through them only separate notes and details.

From the delightful waltzes of Johann Strauss, and via Schubert's and Chopin's inspired dances, the public has a direct way to the experience of so-called classical music. While from the thematic analyses, and through historical and biographical illustrations, the same public will only get the feeling that our art is utterly impotent.

In the experience of a musical work, our greatest joy derives from unexpected encounters with the forgotten images of eternity. For although these encounters are in themselves quite momentary, and the images of eternity in themselves not eternal, this sudden remembrance while listening to the music, constitutes a far greater value than a momentary distraction that makes us forget still more lastingly what we already cannot remember.

To many contemporaries, music appears as an irresponsible "play" of sounds. Play is largely the affair of children. But children are not apt to view play with the condescending lightness of grown-ups. Play for them is a fervent affair. It is their real life. Heaven preserve any older person who should disturb their play by an ironical smile or by falling out of an assumed part - they immediately say; "it is not fair!" and stop playing. With great fervency we dance to jazz, play cards, or put money into a sweepstake, but alas, we no longer know even how to play at music. We chuckle in a senile way over the conventions of the great art of the past - a genuine children's "play" that to those children was the real

life, a fervent matter, but has in our time so far lost its meaning as a game, as to make one feel like shouting: "No, this is not fair!" No game has ever been devised so as to allow every participant to do all he pleased.

When an artist begins to feel that the boundaries of his art are too narrow, when he becomes insensitive to the endless potentialities that lie in a constant renovation of the fundamental elements of his art, and wants to seek this renovation beyond its boundaries – he becomes a traitor to and a deserter from his artistic country. In such cases the "creation" of the artist stands in sudden need of justification or commentaries, whereas art should never need any commentaries whatsoever, since the principal justification of every work of art is precisely the fact that it can be experienced without commentaries.

Every artist who makes reconnoitering trips beyond the boundaries of his art in order to enrich and broaden it, reveals nothing but poverty and narrowness, not in the art itself, however, but in the means that he himself can draw out of that treasure house. A musician who finds that the realm of music is too narrow for him, has become a lesser musician. This applies equally to all cases: when the musician tries to borrow from other arts the means that he lacks, when he borrows them from daily life, or when, tired of all human existence and being on the threshold of eternity, he is no longer able to find sufficiently vital words to express what he contemplates.

Here another consideration arises which may serve as an additional justification of the former anonymous, collective theory of music as the educational discipline of former musicians. That old discipline (amply justified in itself by the creative activity of the great geniuses of the past) made it possible to experience music in the past without any apologetic commentaries in each separate case. While now a whole endless arsenal of different theories has to be brought

forward, an arsenal of keys to the meaning of the majority of contemporary works.

Every detail that has been eliminated from the chain which coordinates it with other details, may well appear unintelligible. If, in the past, criticism had indulged in similar cuts in the senses and had therefore missed certain phenomena as a whole, it does not mean that contemporary criticism should justify all the details that frighten us. They are so unintelligible because they are so ostensibly detached from any subordination to unity.

14. BREVITY and MALFORMATION

For want of time many contemporaries deem the length of a composition its only defect. But even an eight bar period may appear too long, if it is vapid or stupidly constructed! On the other hand, there are undoubtedly significant works, the brevity of which is not conciseness, or concentration, but an underdevelopment, an incompleteness, i.e. a malformation. One must therefore distinguish between artistic brevity and inartistic malformation, as also between the artistic impression of endless perspective that is gained from a great work and an inartistic impression of duration that we experience in works whose insignificant contents fail to justify their development.

A teacher who is tired of music and does not know how to conceal his fatigue from his pupil imparts to the latter, together with music, his own fatigue. A yawn in art is a pestilence that must be placed in the strictest quarantine.

15. IMITATION of GENIUS

While we attempt, in every way, to emancipate ourselves from any succession of former art, and its influence upon us, we, at the same time, imitate the spontaneous processes of creation, possessed by the great masters. Here most people confuse spontaneity with the speed of the process, and forget that the spontaneity of an artistic emotion compels the talented artist to choose very definite means for the accurate

expression of this emotion i.e. that a genuine spontaneity is a surmounting of the means, and, as all surmounting, does not exclude, but rather require labour and the expenditure of time.

Spontaneity is diametrically opposite to the procedures of the incompetent person, who is helpless and continually overcome by his means, and tries to grab the first available sound, image, or colour.

An outward imitation of genius makes us look with contempt on the "dull matter" that we were taught at school. But if this matter ever appeared dull to the genius, it was not because it was alien to him, but merely because it was already familiar to him, before any instruction had begun. (Schubert)

A lightning process of composition, even in a genius, is a proof merely of his giftedness (his personal convenience), and not of his inspiration. The overture to the "Marriage of Figaro" is beautiful, but not because it was written in one night.[34)]

An incitement to speed turns art into sport.

Only in submitting to the immutable laws, governing matter, does an artist succeed in overcoming the obstacles it imposes. We could well learn from sculptors and architects how to submit unconditionally to the nature of their material.

16. " FINE ART"

This designation sounds like an anachronism when applied to "progressive" contemporary music. Where there is NEITHER a choice of images and colours, i.e. where nothing has been eliminated except the fundamental laws of art - bequeathed to us by our great forebears - NOR any

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[34] *There seems to be no evidence that it was so written. [A.J.S.]*

temptations bridled in the struggle with the material there can be no FINE ART.

But perhaps the new paths of contemporary music consist precisely in kindly leaving both these processes - the elimination (i.e. choice) and temptation (i.e. struggle with the matter) - to the perception of the public?

How would it be, if, one fine day, the public, after being sufficiently tempted in the struggle with such matter, suddenly sensed its superiority to the authors and eliminated them together with their "art"?

We must reconstruct the musical language at least to the extent of enabling every educated musician to read the proofs of the compositions of his colleague. New turns of speech, not a new language, do we expect from every new composer!

Not all that is correct is beautiful. But all that is beautiful is always lawful. However, the artistic law is not a secret, but a mystery. A secret implies accurate instructions as to what to do. The law, on the other hand, whispers to us, like the Socratic demon, what not to do.

The pretence that art theory is strictly scientific, is not a scientific pretence; to approach art as a science is faulty reasoning.

Memory as a technical gift is essential to work. It is a great convenience to carry about in one's head such a notebook, such a directory! But to the poetic' fancy, to inspiration and contemplation, memory is not only nonessential, but disturbing. Inspiration and poetic fancy are nothing but an eternal process of remembering, and to know how to remember one must also know how to forget. If there were no winter during which we forget about the spring, the flowers, and the sun, we would never value them so.

17. "CREATION"

Genuine creation, a seal of the spirit, reveals itself only when the artist is heedless of creating, when he is intent only upon serving. The great masters of the past served, and therefore their compositions have earned the seal of the creative spirit. True individuality, like a seal of the soul, comes only when the artist thinks least of all of himself.

Every thought of the individuality of an artist (or, as it used to be called, "originality") that becomes a guiding motive in the work of a composer or in the listener's reaction to it, is infinitely harmful to art. In becoming a guiding motive such a thought constrains the theme, the contents of creation.

The notion of individuality in the aesthetic consciousness corresponds to the notion of "sonority" in the musical craft. "Individuality" and "sonority" are a condition *sine qua non* for the impression that the theme (contents) will make on our inner and outer organs of perception. In other words, that which is devoid of individuality and that which (as we say) does not "sound", is really nothing but the paleness that prevents our grasping the relief of the principal contents.

But this principal contents-theme can never consist either in individuality or sonority. And if the lack of the one or the other considerably lessens the value of the composition and, even reduces it to zero, what of it? We are simply minus one composition. But if individuality and sonority become the deliberate guiding principles of the activity of a whole generation it is a calamity: for then we are minus one art!

The will to "creation" as a means of self-assertion we must eradicate from our minds with a piece of red hot iron. It must reveal itself unconsciously, remain a mystery. The mystery of creation, of individuality, may be observed when the same tonic and dominant, the same cadence, sometimes even the same turn of melody in two composers, produce on us an utterly different impression, the recipe ("secret") of "creation"

and of "individuality" leads to the reverse: the different appears to be alike.

"He has not set the world on fire". As applied to an artist this reproach leads one to suppose that either the soil itself of art, or the soul of man, reacting to it, are, in the imagination of some people, only fit for a conflagration. It has contributed to turning the technique of art into a sort of pyrotechnic.

The artist never talks about anything "in general" - beauty in general, or love in general. He always contemplates the beauty of one given phenomenon and talks as if he were talking only about it. But while the non-artist distractedly skims the surface of phenomena and, without penetrating to their substance, begins to communicate his impressions of them "in general" (from the surface) in an absolutely fruitless way, the gaze of an artist that is directed into the depths of a certain phenomenon and unravels the beauty of a given image only, in reality, through its prism, penetrates to the phenomenon of beauty or love "in general", for in the depth of depths all divergent phenomena merge into unity.

"Every wise man has a fool in his sleeve". A person is wise along the lines where he is gifted. But everyone loses some of his wisdom and becomes short-sighted when he relinquishes the path shown him by God.[35)] He then recedes into the human "in general", which is nothing but an abstraction or chaos. But the more intently he looks into one focal point through the prism of the talent that is his, the greater depths open up before him.

And in the depth of all depths all points converge.

The genius and the ordinary eclectic have one outward similarity: they both turn their gaze towards the whole world. But the genius, by dissolving himself in the world at

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[35] *E.g. Hans Christian Andersen was wise in the domain of the fairy tale, Kryloff in that of the fable.*

the same time assimilates this world in himself (in his soul), The eclectic does not possess this prism. He always dissolves himself, and does not assimilate anything.

Art and life must divide themselves in the matter (in "reality") and unite in the spirit (symbolically), and their interaction must be mutual and equally strong. Ordinarily, however, one talks only of the influence of life on art, as if art to an artist and a genuine connoisseur were a lesser reality than life.

We have seemingly lost our faith in the MIRACLE of ART, i.e. the faith in the capacity of the element itself to be transfigured through the spirit, through inspiration. This faith is diametrically opposed to the faith in the MEANS, i.e. a certain recipe for means typical of the modernist. They say: the triad or the diminished seventh chord are antiquated and no longer have any effect; therefore new chords must be invented. Let us remember the boundless depth of the triad in the opening theme of the Appassionata, and the shattering tragedy of the diminished seventh chord at the end of the development of the first movement!!

The simplest of Schubert's songs, "*Trockne Blumen*", makes a divinely simple impression; but as the only true, accurate solution of a given artistic problem, i.e. when moulded into a harmonious whole, it is incredibly complex and constitutes undoubtedly an artistic miracle.

We have grown to understand and value only exotic colours and have ceased to react to the colours of Europe, our native land in art; not to speak of the colours of the individual thought of separate composers.

The primitive and often inarticulate music of peoples who have not created or even participated in the creation of a musical art, must be viewed as a phenomenon of nature, i.e. as the singing of birds, or thunder. etc. As such, this "music" may move us at times by its naivete, but any imitation of

this naivete is no longer naive in itself, and therefore, no longer artistic.

Faith in beauty, in the unity of art, in the genesis of song, being of the same kind as faith in goodness or truth, is diametrically opposed to the faith in an immediate realization on earth of all these blessings. Having peered into the soul of the world, and especially into our own, we cannot but shudder at the astronomical distance that separates us from the source of light. But this shuddering should vivify and strengthen our faith in light and not shake it. We are called on to aspire continually towards light, but certainly not to attempt to steal its sources for the arrangement of our earthly life, in the same way as we have stolen electricity for the lighting of our dwellings.

If we approach a tree in order to choose a suitable plank of wood, or go out into the field merely to look for healing herbs, we will not behold the beauty of the tree, or of the field. And likewise, if we approach beauty itself not because we love it, not for its own sake, but to satisfy our personal daily concerns, it will turn away from us.

VULGARITY is the common name given to an insufficiently high level of spirituality in art or in the appreciation of it. But is this truly so? Could we describe a delightful Viennese waltz as vulgar? And is not a symphony, armed with all the properties of so-called "serious", "classical" music and dished up before the listener as spiritual food, far more vulgar than this waltz, or even than a song that we may hear in the streets, or in a cabaret? For behind all this masquerading we can at best spy a clown whose proper place is in the circus, and who in his proper surroundings would never be termed vulgar.

Vulgarity is an encroachment upon the spirit, a simulation of the spiritual. So long as no encroachment or simulation has occurred the term "vulgar" does not apply, either in the

case of a primitive person, or even less so in the case of an animal, for its innocent naivete is much more apt to disabuse us of our human vulgarity,

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Artistic nihilism is expressed by loud and undisguised sneezing at art, and is contagious, like a cold. Such an undisguised sneezing we observe e.g. in the composition of songs to the text of newspaper advertisements (such as "on the loss of a dog"); the making of melody "in the shape of a pear"[36]), or scores where the composer himself kindly lets certain instruments perform all they please.

Of course such sneezing would in itself be harmless if it were confined to circuses or cabarets, if it were indulged in only beyond the pale of purely musical institutions and platforms. But unfortunately in our times an amusing circus trick, performed on the same platform, or in the same program as a musical masterpiece among musicians, does not even produce the bewilderment or fright that would take possession of the spectators in a circus if a Bach fugue were suddenly, and without rhyme or reason, played to them.

A predilection for art, as a whole, makes the artist more objective towards its separate "tendencies". But a predilection for these tendencies very often betrays an objective attitude towards art itself. But is this objectivity not simply a passionlessness i.e. an indifference?

That which has the greatest success in every artistic phenomenon, is not this phenomenon itself, nor the artist, nor his compositions, but his glory. This notorious glory interferes invariably with the evaluation of the real magnitude of the phenomenon. For if we take even historical figures without the label of glory that has been pasted onto them, they

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[36] *Here Medtner has in Mind the piano pieces of Erik Satie. [A.J.S.]*

will emerge either far greater, or far smaller, than their glory.

Every artist has his own limits of choice within the limits of art itself. The genuineness of the artist shows itself merely in the fact that his individual limits of choice are indisputable and that he has not encroached on somebody else's limits or any limits alien to him.

Beethoven is infinitely bigger than Grieg in this sense of the limits of choice. Bigger means, of course, deeper, and broader, and higher, all at once, since the limits of choice have also their depth, and breadth, and height.

But the genuineness of Grieg is just as indisputable as that of Beethoven: he never encroached on limits alien to him. His primitive form is just as typical and hallowed in its artistic genuineness as the unheard-of gigantic constructions of Beethoven.

In the sense of artistic genuineness the whole output of such a composer as Grieg, in spite of its modesty and simplicity, must be appraised by us as the only true and accurate achievement of the main problem of every creation: the harmonious adjustment of the individuality of the composer to such limits of choice in art as are granted to him. This adjustment is highly complex and mysterious, and therefore very rare and valuable as an achievement.

Just as the mite of the poor man, in its sincerity and sacrifice, may mean more than the large donation of the rich man, so in art: a flower painted in all humility by a "lesser" artist may move us more deeply than an image of the Madonna done by the skilled hand of a great master. This flower, without the slightest intention of its painter, tells us more, even about God, than the "Madonna", which in spite of the manifest intention of the author, speaks only for his skill. And even if the flower should tell us only about the flower, such a work would still be more significant than a Madonna that reveals to us only the virtuosity of the artist.

The Madonnas of Botticelli and Leonardo are equal, in artistic value, to the Interieurs of Vermeer or Pieter de Hooch. But of course, the idea of God that rests in these Madonnas is higher than the idea of the brownie who haunts the Dutch Interieurs.

Even with great singers feeble songs are to be encountered along with the inspired ones. But this feeble fluid can easily be wrung out by us and will still yield clean transparent water capable of giving us, if nothing else, the reflection of the singer himself and his inspired songs.

In life, a lack usually means an absence of something. In art, a lack usually means a counterfeit of what is lacking. The lack of a theme, or harmony, must be understood not otherwise than as a counterfeit of the one or the other. Not a single artist, no matter how stupid he may be, will begin a work without grabbing at some fragment of thought or image that is to take the place of a theme, i.e. of the initial point of the composition. Not a single musician, no matter how revolutionary he may deem himself, will dare to dispatch his theme into the wild world naked, i.e. ungarbed by harmony or by form. He will even supply it (according to the dictates of the ruling fashion) with sundry documents of his artistic ideology, be it in the shape of a heading, or a preface, or a so-called "program, i.e. one of those documents that are intended to supply the given opus with the passport that will permit it to cross all boundaries.

How wonderful it would be, if in art a lack were not a counterfeit of what is lacking, but a silence, a pause, or at least transparent clean water.

What is usually termed "academicism", is in reality the transparent clean water that we can easily wring out of the great musical art.

This water, though not reflecting the composer's individuality, nevertheless clearly reflects the art itself with its contents and forms. This reflection, to be sure, being a

secondary phenomenon, does not move us, convince us in itself; but nevertheless, as any reflection, it at least does not deny what it reflects.

Lack of individual contents (and therefore of individual form) becomes unbearable in a work of art when it passes into an imitation of individuality, into a counterfeit of it, into a craving for self-assertion at all costs, down to a negation of the autonomous existence of art.

Finally we must not forget that the creation even of great masters began with "academicism". But there was nothing forced in the way they got rid of it. Their way to independence was not disturbed by plunging into a chasm.

In the silence of an artist there is also diligence. He who is never silent, talks from indolence.

Productivity in art must not be measured by the number of opuses, but by the quality and variety of themes. In this sense Glinka is infinitely more productive than Verdi, and Bizet more productive than Meyerbeer.

The theme is what arrests, affixes, and exorcises images, subjects, and occurrences. In one word: what makes the "fleeting" into a "symbol", but not by the method of professional "symbolists", who look upon life a priori as a "symbolical subject", and therefore do not see far enough, do not live it out to the final truth and depth. Such symbolical subjects move us but little in themselves, and really do not give the impression of the theme as some sort of exorcism. The theme is the pivot on which the artist has involuntarily arrested, concentrated, and deepened his gaze, and which has thus become the centre, the focus and initial point in which the whole work is collected and by which it is illuminated.

The theme is what comes to pass, not what happens; therefore those artists who continually contemplated not the accidental, but the eternal had a far greater command of form than we.

The theme is not what was once, what happened and evaporated like smoke, but what has come to pass, is, and always will be, Pushkin's "Arion"[37] just as he started singing once upon a time, sings his "former hymns" for us to this day in the greatest works of geniuses, and this song will resound until the end of the world.

After the expulsion from the Paradise of Art, such as was, for instance, the Renaissance epoch in Italy, or the efflorescence of music in Germany, when artistic creation was in the hands not only of individuals, but of collective forces, not only of geniuses, but whole schools, not of one single generation, but of many - we, exiles scattered all over the world, detached from all heritage and succession, must earn our works of art by hard labour, like miners, and not attempt to pluck them like the flowers of the fields, as we saunter through them.

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[37] Written in 1821. See Medtner's setting of it in the songs of op. 36. [A.J.S.]

ENVOY

The songs of the earth must be human; they must have their earthly soil, their roots, their images, in order to be comprehensible to man. But when the seal of the remembrance of "that song" is completely effaced, when its one sound "without words, but living" no longer vivifies, no longer inspires our songs, they become dull. They also forfeit their humanity, become incomprehensible, just as their soil, too, and their roots and images are turned into a lifeless raw matter. In listening to them we are seized by great weariness, and in our weariness we helplessly grab after the words, endeavour to remember something that we have forgotten.

On the other hand the most artless earthly song that has succeeded in remembering "that song", contains and replaces for every musician the whole wisdom of all theories, all schools.

The one sound of it "without words but living" makes all words unnecessary.